ISSUE 10 | DECEMBER 2012 | 1982~2012: 30 YEARS OF FIGHTING FANTASY!

Fighting Fantazine

THE FIGHTING FANTASY FAN MAGAZINE

BLAST FROM THE PAST!

THE HISTORY OF GAMEBOOKS

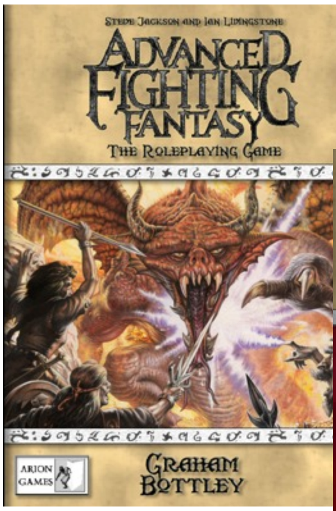
BRICKS & MORTAR!

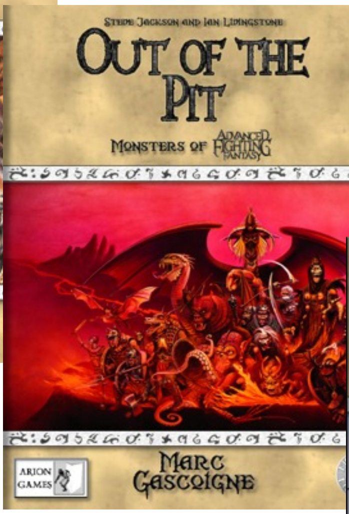
THE TALE OF BECOMING A
FIGHTING FANTASY WRITER IN
AN INTERVIEW WITH PAUL MASON

WE ♥ FIGHTING FANTASY!

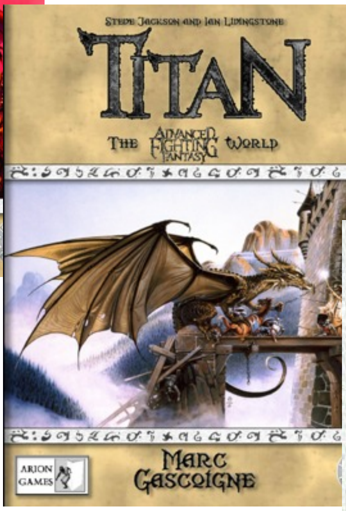
CELEBRATE WITH US 30 YEARS OF THE
GAMEBOOK SENSATION!

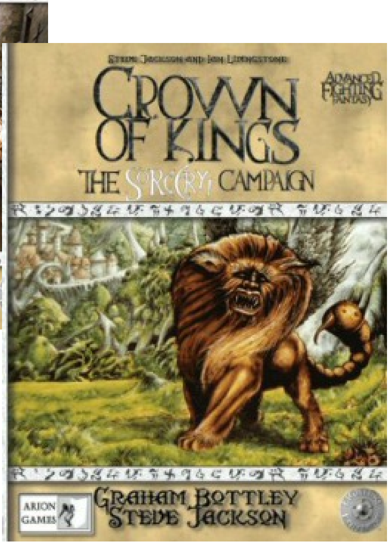
PLUS A BRAND NEW BUMPER FIGHTING FANTASY ADVENTURE!
ARE YOU THE HAND OF FATE?


Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
Advanced Fighting Fantasy
The Roleplaying Game
Arion Games
Graham Bottley

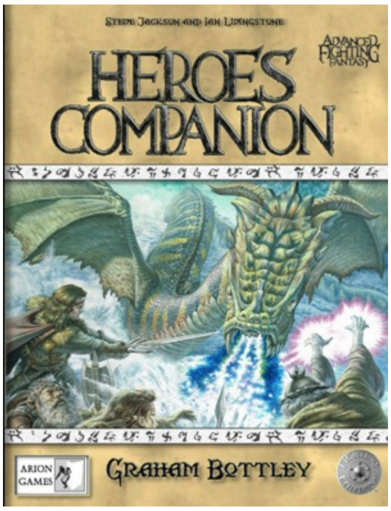

Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
Out of the Pit
Monsters of Advanced Fighting Fantasy
Arion Games
Marc Gascoigne

ADVANCED FIGHTING FANTASY

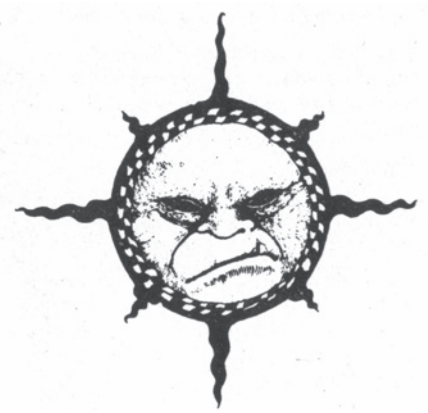

Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
Titan
The Advanced Fighting Fantasy World
Arion Games
Marc Gascoigne


Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
Crown of Kings
The Sorcery! Campaign
Advanced Fighting Fantasy
Arion Games
Graham Bottley
Steve Jackson

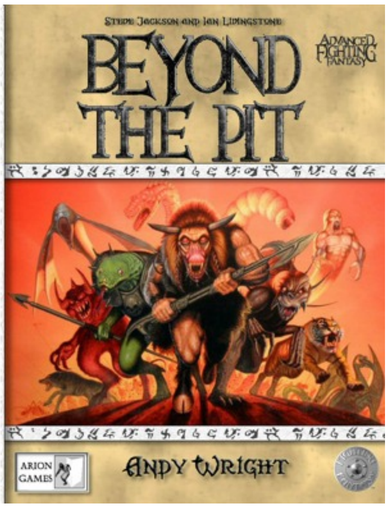
Take your Advanced Fighting Fantasy campaign to new levels. The new Heroes Companion (To be released Jan 2013) brings new rules for armies, hirelings, organisations, wilderness adventures, new magical styles and much more!


Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
Heroes Companion
Advanced Fighting Fantasy
Arion Games
Graham Bottley

Perfect for Directors and players alike, this book is suitable for any game.



2013 will also see the release of Beyond the Pit, containing another 250 monsters from the world of Titan, and also Blacksand, a new look at that classic pit of villainy and piracy.


Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
Beyond the Pit
Advanced Fighting Fantasy
Arion Games
Andy Wright

All of these books are available from any good games store or direct from Cubicle 7 or Arion Games.

ARION GAMES

Cubicle7.co.uk

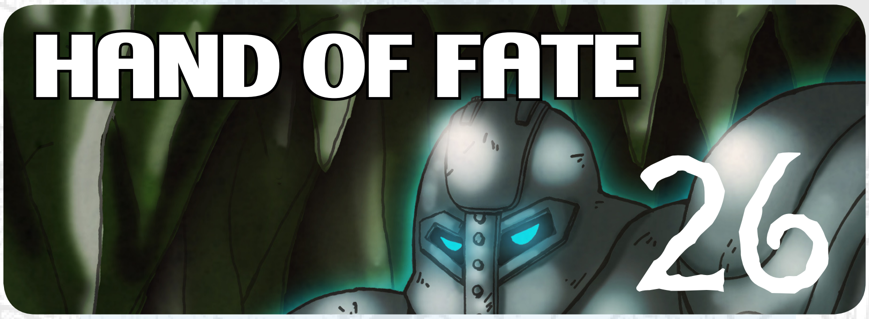
Arion-games.com

CUBICLE 7 SEVEN

Fighting Fantazine

ISSUE 10
DECEMBER 2012

BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS
12



30 REASONS WHY
WE ♥ FF
70

INTERVIEW:

Writer **Paul Mason** started with a fanzine before graduating to working at Games Workshop. Here he explains the path that led him to write for the *Fighting Fantasy* series...

MINI ADVENTURE:

by **Kieran Coghlan**
Illustrated by **Robertson Sondoh Jr.**
Things are not going well for the slayer of Balthus Dire. Not only have you lost your left hand, but the widow of your former enemy has joined forces with the High Priestess of Vatos to unleash the power of the Juggernaut, an unstoppable automaton that will bring chaos and destruction to all of Allansia. Luckily, you are not alone on your mission to stop them. Not so luckily, your companion is a being every bit as evil as those you seek to stop: a Ganjee!

ARTICLE:

We mark thirty years of *Fighting Fantasy* by celebrating thirty different things about the brand that we love!

OTHERS

66 IAN LIVINGSTONE PRESENTS THIRTY YEARS OF FIGHTING FANASY
78 THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF GAMEBOOKS
84 SOMETIMES, TWO DICE, A PENCIL AND AN ERASER ARE NOT ALL YOU NEED
88 ORB IS COMING FULL CIRCLE
92 AELOUS RAVEN AND THE WRATH OF THE SEA-WITCH CHAPTER 5
96 EVERYTHING I REALLY NEED TO KNOW I LEARNT FROM READING FIGHTING FANTASY GAMEBOOKS PART 6

REGULARS

04 LETTER FROM THE EDITOR
05 OMENS & AUGURIES
98 THE ARCANE ARCHIVE
100 FIGHTING FANTASY COLLECTOR
102 FIGHTING DANTASY

Turn to paragraph **1**.

STAFF

EDITOR
ALEXANDER BALLINGALL
editor@fightingfantazine.co.uk
www.twitter.com/gallicus
NEWS EDITOR
GUILLERMO PAREDES
OUT OF THE PIT EDITOR
ANDREW WRIGHT
ADVENTURE EDITOR
DEMIAN KATZ

FRONT COVER ARTWORK
ERIC CHAUSSIN
BACK COVER ARTWORK
ERIC CHAUSSIN

With thanks to: Graham Bottley, Eric Chaussin, Jonathan Green, Paul Mason, Guillermo Paredes, Neil Rennison and Alexa Turness. “The old man shakes his head sadly as you pick yourself up and leave, but he doesn’t try to stop you.”

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

editor@fightingfantazine.co.uk

So that was 2012!

Here we are, right at the end of the anniversary year with another issue of the magazine. It has been a wild ride, one that is not yet over with plenty to come in 2013 – take a look in our news section if you don't believe me!

Meanwhile, what do we have for you? We continue our series of interviews, beginning a two-part Q&A session with writer Paul Mason who shares a few interesting titbits with us. We've another writer planned once that is wrapped up too, so it is all go here at *Fighting Fantazine*.

Then, Kieran Coghlan (writer of issue #3's *Prey of the Hunter*) returns with a new adventure entitled *Hand of Fate*, one that wraps up our anniversary year trilogy of sequels to official *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks. This adventure is graced with the art of newcomer Robertson Sondoh Jr., and we hope to see more from him in issues to come. The cover art is by Eric Chaussin who is busy contributing to the *Way of the Tiger* RPG and is someone we hope will contribute to future issues as well.

Sadly, other commitments has meant that you will have to wait till next issue for the second part of Andrew Wright's *The Hunt for the Black Whale AFF* scenario, but like myself you'll probably forgive him given that has been hard at work on the follow-up to *Out of the Pit*.

Our main article of the issue is the *30 Reasons* one, with contributions from many fans who spell out just why it is they are still reading *Fighting Fantasy* thirty years after it originally launched. We follow that up with a couple of articles looking at the history and evolutions of the gamebooks and a recap of Ian Livingstone's talk at the Edinburgh Interactive festival.

After some consultation, many readers expressed a liking for seeing material about other gamebook ranges beyond *Fighting Fantasy* appear in this magazine. To that end, we gradually ease our way into this with David Walter's article on Orb (as featured in *Talisman of Death*) and hope to have our first non-*Fighting Fantasy* mini adventure soon, probably set in the world of *Lone Wolf*.

Don't forget that we're always open to suggestions on how to improve the magazine, so if you have ideas let us know! Next year we plan to have another survey (not quite as epic in scope, but not quite so focussed on the books) and hope that you'll join in with that.

Finally we say goodbye to Guillermo Paredes who has been out news editor. He's off to pastures greener, and we welcome Stuart Lloyd into the hot seat! I'll sign off for now, hip deep that I am in material for issue #11...

Alex

Fighting Fantazine – The Fighting Fantasy Fan Magazine • Issue 10. Published December 2013.
Published three to four times a year.

WEBSITE: http://www.fightingfantazine.co.uk/
BLOG: http://fightingfantazine.blogspot.com/

CONTRIBUTIONS: Contributions to the fanzine in the form of letters, articles, reviews, fanfiction, artwork, comics et cetera are welcomed and readily invited.

NEXT DEADLINE: **February 28th 2013**

All *Fighting Fantasy* material is © Steve Jackson, Ian Livingstone, Wizard Books 2012. All other material is © **Fighting Fantazine – The Fighting Fantasy Fan Magazine** and the individual writers and artists unless otherwise indicated. **Fighting Fantazine – The Fighting Fantasy Fan Magazine** is a not-for-profit fanzine and no attempt has been made to supersede the copyrights held by Wizard Books, Steve Jackson, Ian Livingstone or any other persons or organisations. No similarity between any of the fictional names, characters persons and/or institutions herein with those of any living or dead persons or institutions is intended and any such similarity is purely coincidental. The views expressed in this fan publication (**Fighting Fantazine – The Fighting Fantasy Fan Magazine**) are those of the credited writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor. Nothing may be reproduced by any means in whole or part without written permission of the publishers. All letters sent to this fanzine will be considered for publication, but the publishers cannot be held responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, photographs or artwork. Where possible, permission from the artists has been sought for the reproduction of *Fighting Fantasy* art. If you have any queries about this, please contact the Editor. © 2012

compiled by
GUILLERMO PAREDES

OMENS & AUGURIES

ALL THE LATEST NEWS FROM EVERY CORNER OF TITAN AND BEYOND!

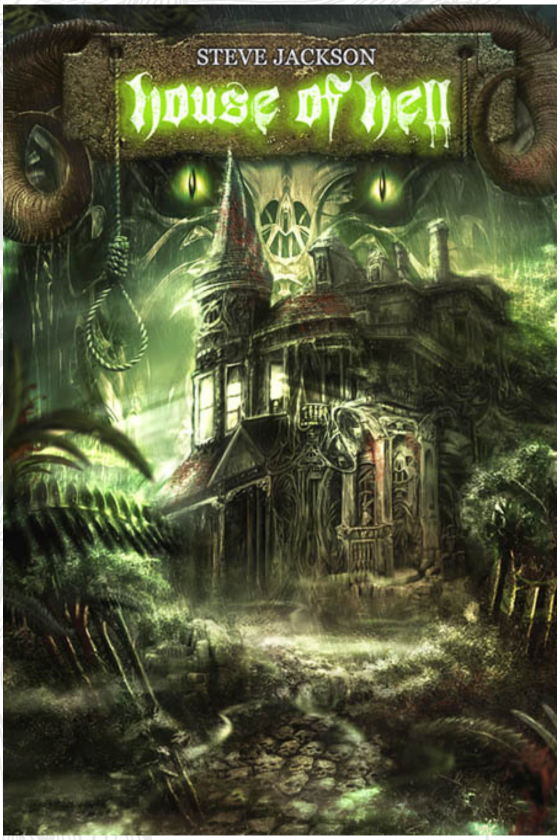
Welcome, people! Several exciting gamebook releases took place in 2012, and things also look good in 2013. Here is what we got in the last few months, plus some announcements for the future:

FIGHTING FANTASY – HERE TO STAY!

While there has yet to be any word on either further reprints of older titles or brand new adventures from Wizard Books, *Fighting Fantasy* continues to do well in other media...

TIN MAN GAMES

The newest *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook, *Blood of the Zombies* has been released for iOS and Android devices, courtesy of the guys at Tin Man Games. The App retails for 3.99 GBP. This company has also gained the right to publish electronic versions of some of classic gamebooks from the range. Their first conversion, *House of Hell*, should arrive to iOS and Android devices sometime early next year with a new piece of cover art by Dan Maxwell (see right). Tin Man also have *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain**, *The Citadel of Chaos**, *The Forest of Doom*, *City of Thieves**, *Deathtrap Dungeon**, *Appointment with F.E.A.R.* and *Creature of Havoc** slated for 2013. (Those titles with an asterisk mark (*) have previously appeared on iOS in conversions by Big Blue Bubble, but all are no longer available.)



WORLDWEAVER

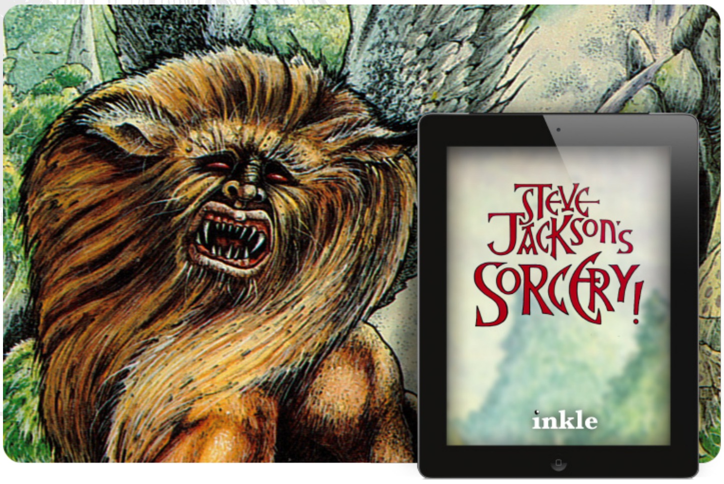
Worldweaver has released a Kindle version of the classic gamebook *Creature of Havoc*. Unfortunately, like previous titles from Worldweaver, it is only currently available for US customers with no word on when it and back titles might cross the pond. US Kindle owners can get hold of it for 3.99 USD. We have heard no word yet about any further *Fighting Fantasy* releases for this platform.

STEVE JACKSON
FIGHTING FANTASY
YOU ARE THE HERO
CREATURE OF HAVOC

INKLE STUDIOS

Fighting Fantasy has teamed with developer Inkle Studios (the people who programmed Dave Morris' interactive fiction piece *Frankenstein*) to release all four of Steve Jackson's *Sorcery!* gamebooks for iOS devices (previously a version of *The Shamutanti Hills* was released for iOS by Seb EJ Ltd but is no longer available). The books will feature an all-new strategic combat system, more character choices than the original books allowed, and a more detailed game-world to explore. In the words of the developers:

> *Nothing is certain in* Sorcery!, *not even the words themselves, and inkle's game-engine can customise every word based on how you play. The choices you make will develop your character, changing the text itself, and altering*



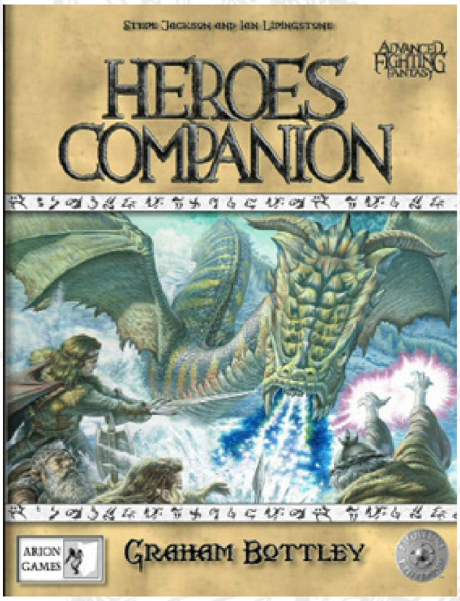
YOU ARE THE HERO
KICKSTARTER
A CELEBRATION OF 30 YEARS OF FIGHTING FANTASY
FF
FIGHTING FANTASY

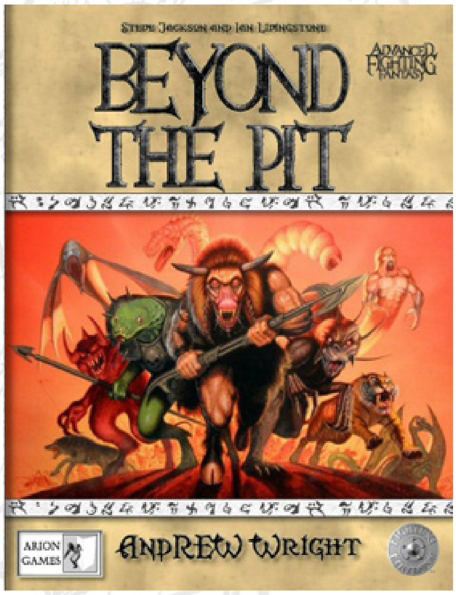
your opportunities and how people in the world respond to you. Will you be a rogue, a thief, a saviour, a tradesman? Are you cruel or generous; smart or forceful, charming or rude? Will people trust you – and can you be trusted?

Expect the new versions of the *Sorcery!* gamebooks to come out next year.

YOU ARE THE HERO

Fighting Fantasy author Jonathan Green has proposed to write a book to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the *Fighting Fantasy* series. He has promised to include a detailed history of all *Fighting Fantasy*-related products, including – but not limited to – gamebooks (UK and foreign editions), novels, boardgames and videogames. If it ever sees the light of day, the book will include a cover by renowned artist Martin McKenna, interviews with Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone, plus several other goodies. At the time of this writing the project has only received two-thirds of its required funding, so if you want to make it a reality, go to www.kickstarter.com/projects/1412864360/you-are-the-hero and pledge soon!


Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
HEROES COMPANION
Advanced Fighting Fantasy
Arion Games
Graham Bottley


Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
BEYOND THE PIT
Advanced Fighting Fantasy
Arion Games
Andrew Wright

ADVANCED FIGHTING FANTASY

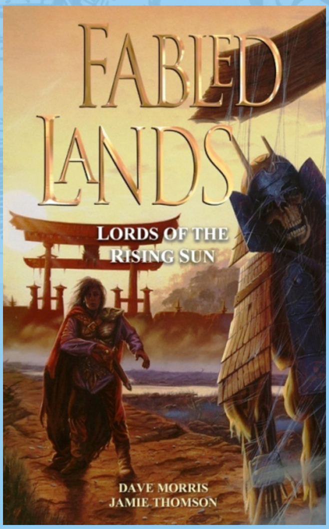
Those of you who are into multi-player RPGs should check out the new releases from Arion Games for the second edition of the *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* RPG. As I write this, the *Heroes Companion* by Graham Bottley is described as 'soon to be released'. This book will include rules for maintaining armies and fiefdoms, wilderness rules, and new skills and spells, among other stuff. The company has also announced a new monster book by Andrew Wright titled *Beyond the Pit* (with 250 new creatures) and a reworking of the classic *Blacksand!* RPG supplement, both slated for early 2013.

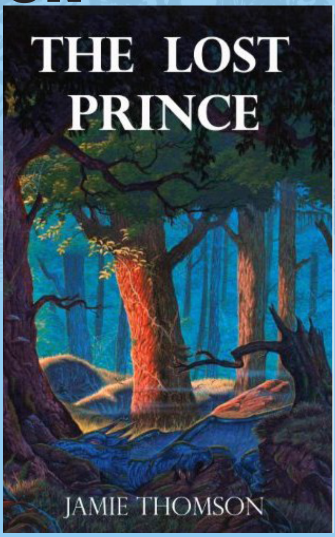
DAVE MORRIS & JAMIE THOMSON

These two gamebook authors have plenty of exciting projects in the pipeline...

FABLED LANDS

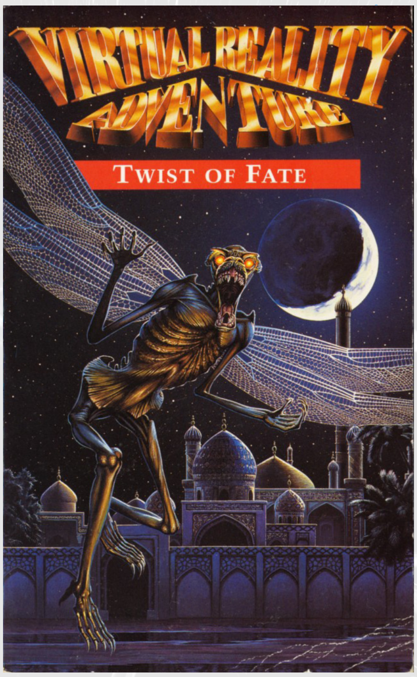
They have published reprints of books 5 and 6 in the *Fabled Lands* series, *The Court of Hidden Faces* and *Lords of the Rising Sun*. They are available from Amazon for 6.29 GBP. A new novel set in the *Fabled Lands* universe, titled *The Lost Prince*, is also out in paper and Kindle versions. It retails for 3.99 GBP. These authors have announced a deal with Spirit Entertainment to produce iOS, Android, Nook and Kindle versions of the six titles in the *Fabled Lands* series. Details are sketchy at this point, so bear with us for a while.

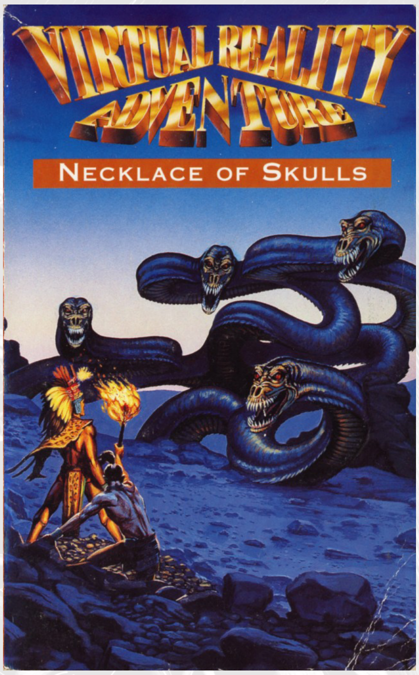

FABLED LANDS
LORDS OF THE RISING SUN
DAVE MORRIS
JAMIE THOMSON


THE LOST PRINCE
JAMIE THOMSON

VIRTUAL REALITY

Morris and Thomson are also preparing four of the original *Virtual Reality* gamebooks for release next year (the titles are *Down Among the Dead Men*, *Necklace of Skulls*, *Heart of Ice* and *Twist of Fate*). The new version of this last book will actually be a reworking that will feature numerous gameplay improvements. Two of the *Virtual Reality* books will also be released in epub3 and iOS versions.





WAY OF THE TIGER

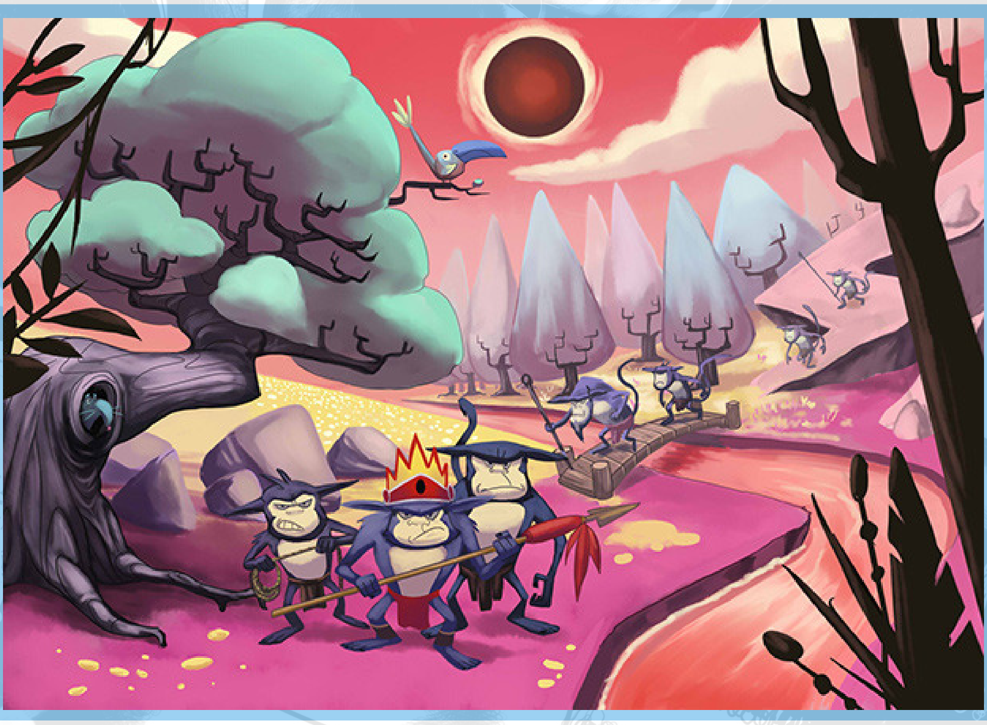
The authors have also promised reprints of the first two *Way of the Tiger* gamebooks (*Avenger!* and *Assassin!*) for next year. They are also working on an all-new seventh instalment in the series. Moreover, Jamie Thomson is writing an all new horror Wild West adventure gamebook titled *Undeadwood*, which could possibly see release next year.

Finally, the interactive version of *Frankenstein* by Dave Morris will be out in epub3 and Kindle versions. Morris has promised an all-new gamebook based on a similar concept, also due next year.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

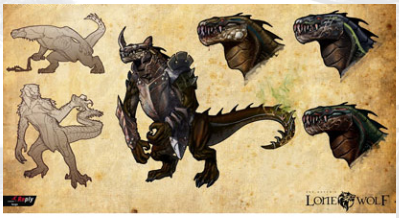
Twenty titles in this classic series, including *The Abominable Snowman*, *Journey Under the Sea*, *Lost on the Amazon*, *The Trail of Lost Time*, and *Project UFO* have been released for the iOS and Kindle platforms. Visit www.cyoa.com for more info.

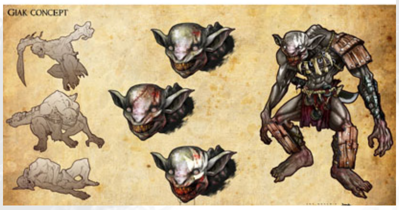
A company named Visual Baker recently successfully raised Kickstarter funding for an iOS adaptation of Edward Packard´s *Choose Your Own Adventure* book *The Underground Kingdom* (see art to the right). Expect to see it released in early 2013.



LONE WOLF

Thanks to the fellows over at the amazing gamebook site Librogame's Land, we have learned that there is hope a videogame based on the *Lone Wolf* gamebooks may see the light of day in 2013. The game will not be an action game, but rather an electronic gamebook set between books 3 (*The Caverns of Kalte*) and 4 (*The Chasm of Doom*) in the original series.





The game, which will be divided into three installments, has been written by *Lone Wolf* author Joe Dever himself. It will be available from Atlantyca, an Italian publisher, for iOS and Android devices.

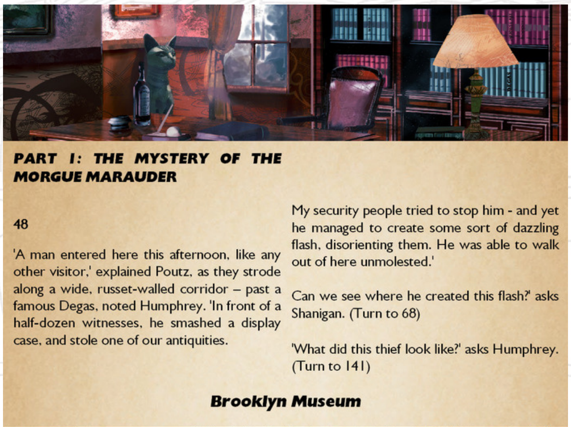
More detailed info at www.librogame.net/index.php/lglmag/lglmagok

MEGARA ENTERTAINMENT

This publisher has made a tabletop RPG based on the classic *The Way of the Tiger* gamebook series available for pre-order. You can order just the hardcover rulebook or a collector bundle which includes a copy of the rulebook signed by authors Mark Smith and Jamie Thomson, a pdf version of the book and a special gift. The basic version costs 56.00 EUR and the collector package costs 108.00 EUR. To order, visit http://megara-entertainment.com.

This publisher will also, thanks to Kickstarter, release a new gamebook set in New York during the thirties, *Arcana Agency: The Thief of Memories*, in which the reader controls a group of investigators facing occult mysteries. The book will be lavishly illustrated. This project definitely has a lot of promise. Look for it to be available in early 2013.

THE WAY OF THE
TIGER
ROLEPLAYING GAME IN THE WORLD OF ORB
By Mikaël Louys, Paul Gresty, Richard S. Hetley, David Walters & Michael Spencelyah



PART I: THE MYSTERY OF THE MORGUE MARAUDER

48

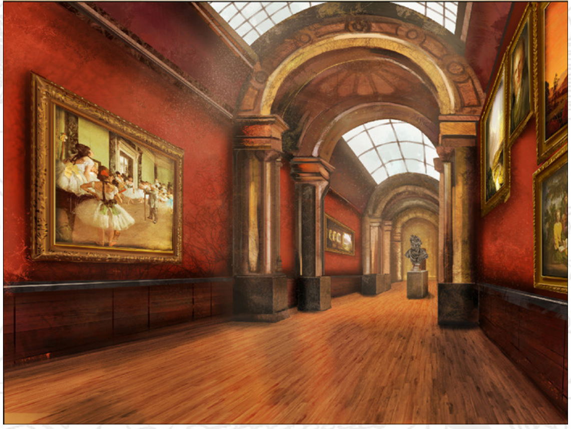
'A man entered here this afternoon, like any other visitor,' explained Poutz, as they strode along a wide, russet-walled corridor – past a famous Degas, noted Humphrey. 'In front of a half-dozen witnesses, he smashed a display case, and stole one of our antiquities.

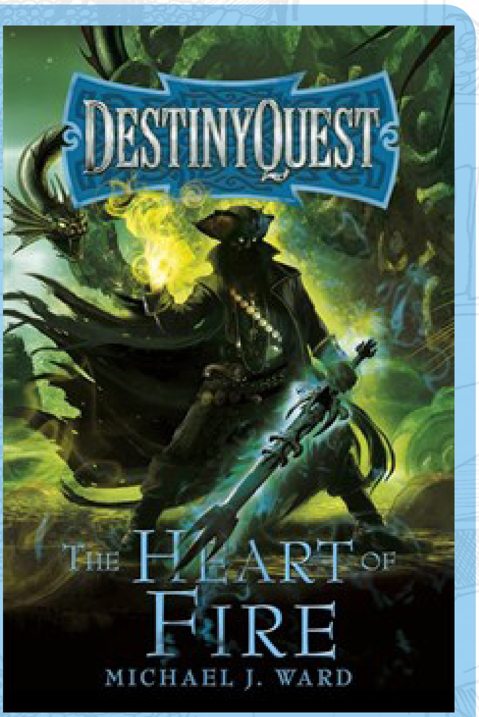
My security people tried to stop him - and yet he managed to create some sort of dazzling flash, disorienting them. He was able to walk out of here unmolested.'

Can we see where he created this flash?' asks Shanigan. (Turn to 68)

'What did this thief look like?' asks Humphrey. (Turn to 141)

Brooklyn Museum





DESTINY QUEST

Author Michael Ward has published a new edition of his massive fantasy gamebook *The Legion of Shadow*. The second title in his fantasy gamebook series is also out, under the title *The Heart of Fire*. The books are available in paper and Kindle versions for 8.99 GBP.

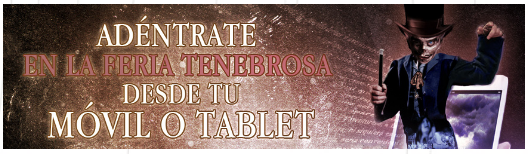
ADVENTURER
THE SOLO ROLEPLAYING GAME

ADVENTURE GAMES GUILD

The people behind this imprint have made a name for themselves publishing gamebooks in recent years. They have now released a set of rules designed for solo role-playing, titled *Adventurer: The Solo Roleplaying Game*. They will be releasing several solo adventures for this system in 2013, each written by a different gamebook enthusiast (who include in their number a few contributors to this humble magazine). The announced titles are (in no particular order as publication dates have yet to be announced): *Bane of the Golemheart* by Stuart Lloyd, *Beneath the Valley of the Wraiths* by Ian Brocklehurst, *The Canticle of the Demon* by David Walters, *Curse of the Shadowbrand* by August Hahn, *Fire Across the Plains* by The Warden, *The Gift of the Fog King* by Paul Gretsy, *Siege of Highsilver* by Shane Garvey, *The True Barbarian*, by Jenny Green, *Blackstorm* by Scott Malthouse, and *Shadow Over Wildehaven* by Scott Greig. You can read more about them in www.adventuregamesguild.com/blog.html

EPNUKE

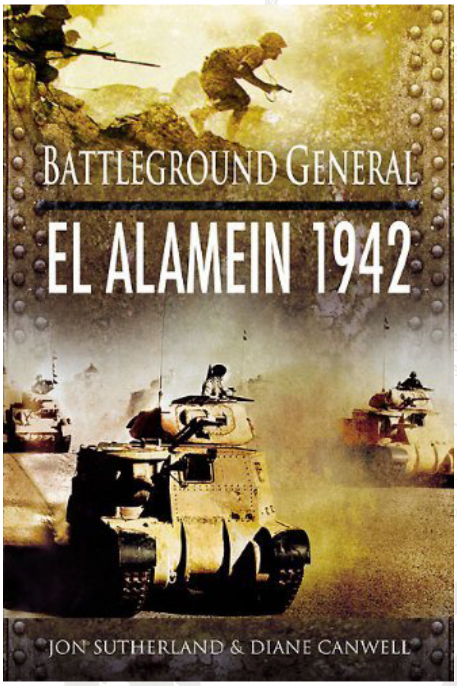
This Spanish publisher has announced a sequel to their Android gamebook *Saint George: The Forging of a Legend*. They have also announced a new horror gamebook to be published for digital platforms in Spanish and Catalan, titled *En la Feria Tenebrosa* (*In the Dark Fair*). Release dates are not firm yet, but we will let you know when we learn more.



MISCELLANEOUS RELEASES

BATTLEGROUND GENERAL

Veteran gamebook author Jon Sutherland (*Double Game* and *Real Life Gamebooks*), along with Diane Canwell, has released a new gamebook based on World War II. *El Alamein 1942*, the second instalment in the *Battleground General* series, is available for 11.69 GBP.


BATTLEGROUND GENERAL
EL ALAMEIN 1942
JON SUTHERLAND & DIANE CANWELL

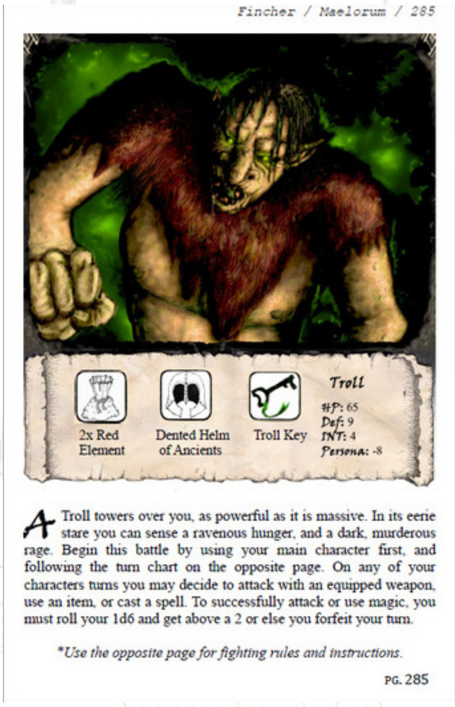
SHERLOCK HOLMES

The classic *Sherlock Holmes Solo Mysteries* gamebook has been re-released for iOS devices by a company called AppEndix LLC. The iOS version includes support for several languages besides English. You can download the App from the iTunes store at itunes.apple.com/us/app/sherlock-holmes-1/id550319671?mt=8. According to the publishers, they will release the entire series for this platform, including the eighth book (*The Lost Heir*), which never saw publication in English.

TIMES
rder at the
Club

MAELORUM

While on the subject of iApp gamebooks, a new fantasy adventure titled *Maelorum* will soon find its way to print and iOS devices. The gamebook will have a dark fantasy setting and claims influence from the legendary videogame *Shadowgate*. No firm release date has been set.


Fincher / Maelorum / 285

2x Red Element
Dented Helm of Ancients
Troll Key

Troll
HP: 65
Def: 9
INT: 4
Persona: -8

A Troll towers over you, as powerful as it is massive. In its eerie stare you can sense a ravenous hunger, and a dark, murderous rage. Begin this battle by using your main character first, and following the turn chart on the opposite page. On any of your characters turns you may decide to attack with an equipped weapon, use an item, or cast a spell. To successfully attack or use magic, you must roll your 1d6 and get above a 2 or else you forfeit your turn.

**Use the opposite page for fighting rules and instructions.*

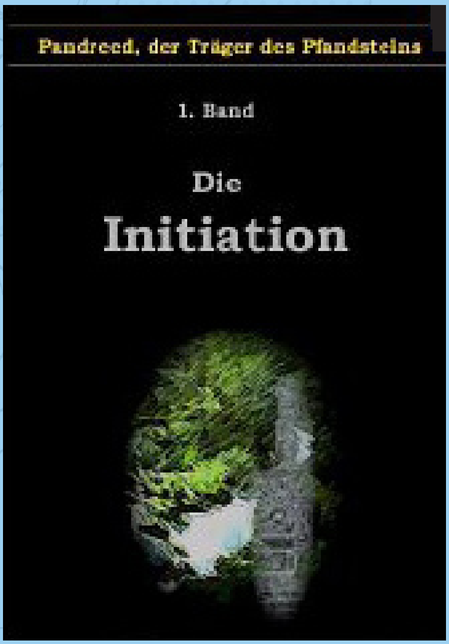
PG. 285

OTHER LANGUAGES

Editions Ada has published the third gamebook in the French-language *A Vous de Jouer* fantasy gamebook series. *Le Reve de Vent* (*The Dream of the Wind*) by Stephan Bilodeau and Cedric Zampini. The book is available directly from the publishers for 8.95 CDN.

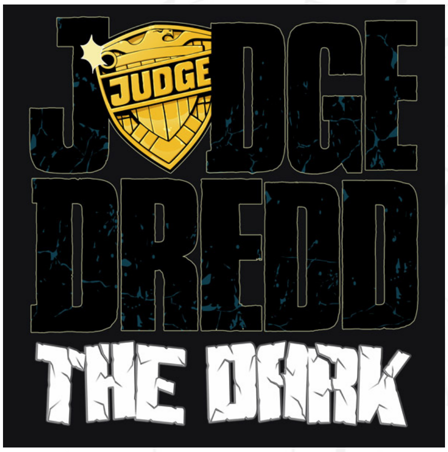
You can also find a new German fantasy gamebook titled *Die Initiation* (*The Initiation*) from authors Stephan Roess and Susanne Rauth-Roess. The book is available only on Kindle from www.amazon.de, for the price of 1.78 EUR.

À VOUS DE JOUER
- Le rêve de vent -
Tome 3
STÉPHAN BILODEAU
CÉDRIC ZAMPINI
A·A
Livre - jeu


Pandreed, der Träger des Pfandsteins
1. Band
Die
Initiation

TIN MAN GAMES

Besides the aforementioned *Fighting Fantasy* adaptations, this company has announced a plethora of gamebook releases for iOS, Android and other platforms, all due next year...

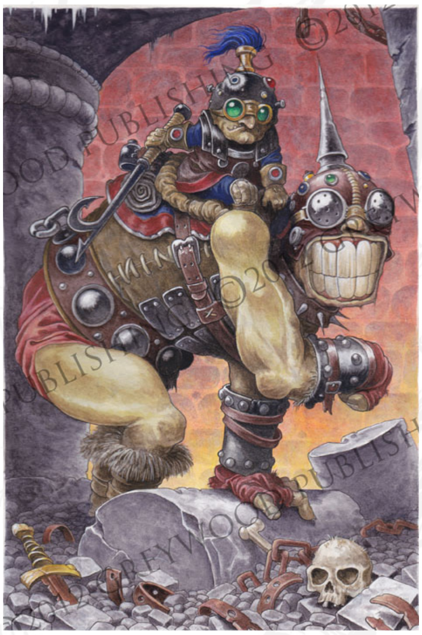

JUDGE
JUDGE DREDD
THE DARK

JUDGE DREDD

A new *Judge Dredd* gamebook, titled *The Dark*, is already in the works with the adventure being penned by Nick Robinson, author of the previous adventure *Countdown Sector 106*. Look for the new title around the middle of 2013.

GUN DOGS

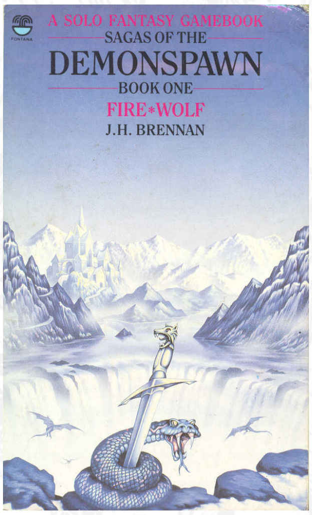
A new book by Gary Chalk (collaborator on *Lone Wolf*) and Jamie Wallis (author of the Myriador d20 conversions of *Fighting Fantasy* books) titled *Gun Dogs*, set in an apocalyptic fantasy world, will also be released next year. The adventure is described as follows:

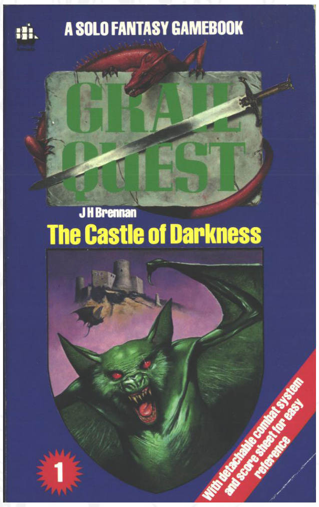


> *You have been charged with treason against the empire and placed on death's row. The emperor offers you a choice: to die a slow and humiliating death or to serve as a Gun Dog. Your decision is obvious, but it will only delay your death for a few days. Gun Dogs have a short life expectancy. A magical collar is placed around your neck. If you try and remove it, you choke to death. If you deviate from the mission or try and escape, you choke to death. Do as your told, serve the empire and redeem yourself and the emperor 'might' have it removed one day.*
>
> *You are given a sword and one of those newfangled hand guns. Your mission will take you to the furthest outpost of the empire – Fort Wylde. The emperor's only nephew is serving his first command there and there has been no word from them for three weeks. One pigeon going missing was not unexpected, pigeons can get shot down by Masker Goblins or eaten by Crakes, but when the next two don't appear, the emperor starts to worry and decides to send off one of his Gun Dogs to investigate.*
>
> *Congratulations! You will be sent where an army cannot go and an angel would fear to tread. You are expendable. You are a Gun Dog.*

J.H. BRENNAN

Tin Man will working with another author from the 'golden age' of gamebooks, working on converting the *Sagas of the Demonspawn* and *Grailquest* gamebook series (both by J. H. Brennan) to modern digital formats. *Sagas* consists of four titles originally published in 1984 and 1985, while *Grailquest* had eight books that were first published between 1984 and 1987.

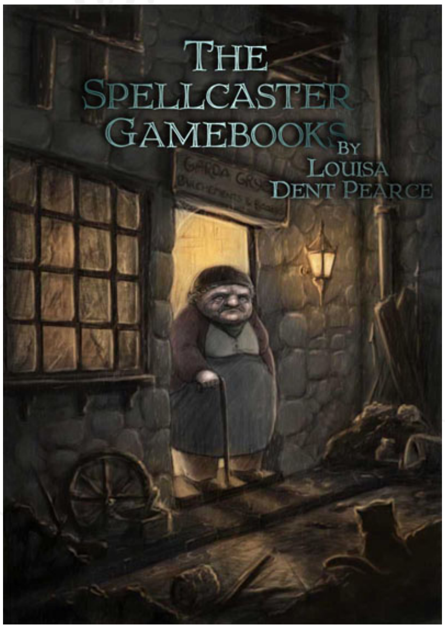

A SOLO FANTASY GAMEBOOK
SAGAS OF THE
DEMONSPAWN
BOOK ONE
FIRE*WOLF
J.H. BRENNAN


A SOLO FANTASY GAMEBOOK
GRAILQUEST
J H Brennan
The Castle of Darkness
1
With detachable combat system and score sheet for easy reference

THE SPELLCASTER GAMEBOOKS

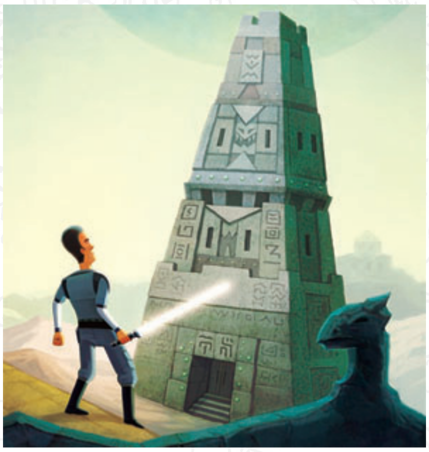
The Spellcaster Gamebooks series by Louisa Dent, which previously had only one book published, will also be revived for digital platforms by this company. The developers are aiming at releasing all three books in this series (*The Forgotten Spell*, *The Gatekeeper's Oath* and *The Castle of Suidemor*) in the course of 2013.

> *Dare to open the pages of the Spellcaster Trilogy and you will be*


THE SPELLCASTER GAMEBOOKS
BY LOUISA DENT PEARCE

entering the strange and dangerous world of Suidemor, the evil city of the Faeries populated by magical fey who speak a language that is foreign to you and trade in crafts and magic of which you know nothing. Yet your quest would strike fear into the heart of even the best sorcerer—you must find the Forgotten Spell, a powerful enchantment which has been cast over the King of the Elder Fey to make him forget his true identity.

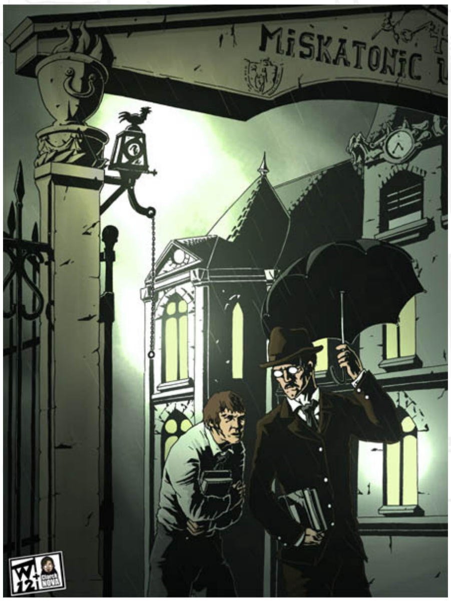
TRIAL OF THE CLONE



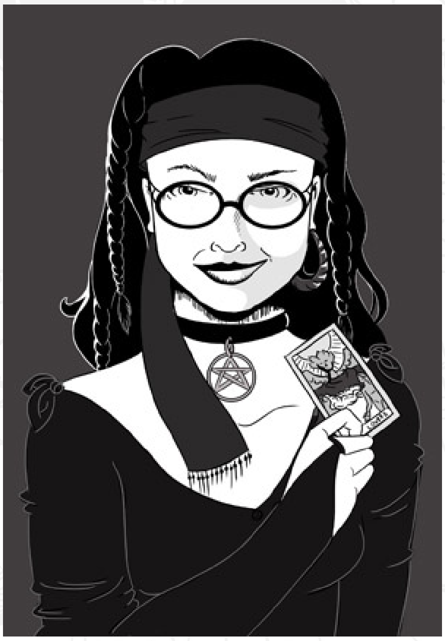
Trial of the Clone, a science-fiction gamebook by famed *Saturday Morning Breakfast Cereal* author Zach Weinersmith, will also be seeing a digital release courtesy of the folks at Tin Man. It is currently slated for a release during the second quarter of 2013.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Tin Man Games have a French-language Lovecraftian gamebook titled *Les Fils d'Uruzime* in the works, set in American in 1929. This gamebook is a collaboration with France-based Studio 09. The adventure will surface in early 2013, with an English translation promised. A second title, *La Drange '65* (set in the Vietnam War), and a third (set in the 1930s) are already in the works.



While not in the Japanese language itself, the next titled from Tin Man Games is a gamebook based on computer game genre of Japanese dating sims known as 恋愛シミュレーションゲーム (ren'ai shimyurēshon gēmu). Titled *Shira Oka: Alice's Story*, the gamebook is based on the ren'ai game *Shirka Oka: Second Chances* created by San Fransico-based Okashi Studios.



The *Strange Loves* romantic supernatural gamebook range is back with a second title, called *Hex Boyfriends* by Lacy Wilson.

Tin Man will also be converting the First Prize and Merit Award winning titles from the 2012 Windhammer Prize for Short Gamebook Fiction to digital formats. These titles are *Final Payment* by Zachary Carango, *Academy of Magic* by Marty Runyon, and *Legacy of the Zendari* by Ashton Saylor (go to www.arborell.com/windhammer_prize.html to read these and the other participating entries in pdf).

GAMEBOOK ADVENTURES

Last, but not least is the gamebook range that kicked things off for Tin Man Games. *Gamebook Adventures* has a further six new titles planned for the series and due for release across 2013 and early 2014.

©Tin Man Games Pty. Ltd.

©Tin Man Games Pty. Ltd.

The first two titles are sequels to earlier adventures, with the first, still currently going by the working title of *Assassin 2* (being a sequel to *An Assassin in Orlandes*) again written by S.P. Osborne and illustrated by Pikka Harvala:

©Tin Man Games Pty. Ltd.

> *The mysterious death of friend arouses your suspicions and once again you find yourself at the heart of conspiracy that takes you back to your home village and a meeting with your old adventuring party from your youth.*

©Tin Man Games Pty. Ltd.
©Tin Man Games Pty. Ltd.

The second title is *Sultans of Rema* by Gaetano Abbondanza (follow up to *Slaves of Rema*).

Last but not least, you can now play Tin Man's gamebook *Catacombs of the Undercity* on Windows and Mac, bringing the total number of *Gamebook Adventures* titles released on these platforms to five. Visit www.desura.com to buy.

BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS

By the time the Puffin series of Fighting Fantasy *gamebooks came to an end, writer* ***Paul Mason*** *was one of the established hands with five titles under his belt. He graciously took the time to talk to* Fighting Fantazine *about how he came to be in such a position.*

ORIGINS – THE TERRIBLY EXCITING BACKSTORY OF PAUL MASON

What can you share of your background?
I come from Sutton Coldfield, a rather pretentious town north of Birmingham, in the English Midlands.

The only conceivably interesting thing about my family origins is the connection with Saint Domingue (now Haiti) on my mother's side, which I share with Alexander Dumas. Though in my case, my ancestors were slave plantation owners. According to the family history, though, they were 'relatively nice' plantation owners, because when Toussaint L'Ouverture (a particular hero of mine) led the successful slave revolt (the only really successful one in history, which is perhaps why Haiti has been 'punished' ever since by Imperial powers), they were spared because their own slaves pleaded for their lives! My ancestor was actually a cabin boy on an American ship which was stopped by a British man'o'war. As a citizen of an 'enemy nation' (Saint Domingue was still considered part of France at the time) he was seized. He then persuaded the British captain to let him become one of the crew and he spent the rest of his life as part of the British navy in the Napoleonic Wars. As a result of which, I am British.

Oh, and his descendents (my grandfather and uncles) built Rolls-Royces. While my mum was the Cadbury family (yes, that Cadbury family) nanny.

Despite all this apparent connection with the world of privilege, however, we were not people of means. My other grandfather was a miner.

At some point in my childhood I got into wargaming. Then when I was 14, I saw an article about *Dungeons & Dragons* in a wargaming magazine, and was hooked. I went to Warwick University and was fortunate, or not, to find that there were loads of people there who, like me, were into role-playing, and fanzine publishing. Coincidentally I also met there Craig Hinton, of *Doctor Who* fan fame (and through him Justin Richards, when he visited one of the Warwick video weekends), so I also made a connection with *Doctor Who* fandom, as well as SF fandom, postal gaming

In the first part of his interview with *Fighting Fantazine*, writer **PAUL MASON** talks about his journey to the world of Titan.

and others. This is what people often label as 'sad'. I label it as 'my university experience.'

I studied management science, which I hated. More importantly, I played in Matt Williams's Rosekrieg campaign, ran my own games, and started up my own fanzine, which became known as *Imazine*.

Have you alway been interested in fantasy?
Interesting question, because the answer is 'no', but probably not in the order you might assume. Which is to say, as a kid I loved fantasy. I read *The Hobbit* at a very early age (I'd also categorise the James Bond novels as fantasy). I remember going in to my local library and asking them for fantasy books. In those days fantasy wasn't really even recognised as a category (how that has changed!), and the librarian directed me to *Gormenghast*. Which was weird (and I now wish I'd taken her advice and read the trilogy then, rather than many years later). I read *Lord of the Rings* many times and devoured all sorts of other fantasy. I particularly liked Fritz Leiber's *Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser* stories.

But I actually lost interest in fantasy when it turned into novelisations of *Dungeons & Dragons*. It seemed to lose the sense of difference and exoticism that I liked, and became just a set of trappings to hang on what were essentially romance novels.

Nowadays I read very little fantasy, and what I read has to be stuff that captures the feeling of 'estrangement' that I crave. One current example would be Dave Morris's graphic novel *Mirabilis*.

Was becoming a writer a childhood ambition?
I can't remember. Probably, but then I had lots of childhood ambitions, such as becoming a lawyer, but very little that connected them to reality. To be quite honest, I never really knew what I wanted to become, and to some extent, I still don't. But I'm not complaining about the path I ended up meandering along.

What would say are the chief influences on your writings?
Assuming you're meaning the gamebooks I wrote, I think I wore my influences on my sleeve. Anything with exotic backgrounds and clever-clever plotting, really (and I'm not using 'clever-clever' in a self-complimentary sense). One influence you can see writ large in the Isle of the Dawn books is *The Water Margin*. I loved this TV show as a kid, and it ended up as something of an obsession. I mean, I even moved to the country it was made in! (Though almost nobody here remembers it.) I've read most English translations, a couple of Japanese manga versions, watched the more recent Chinese TV show and designed and run a role-playing game based on it.

And of course other TV shows such as *Doctor Who* and *Robin of Sherwood*, both of which I've managed some tiny contribution towards (a cameo appearance in the Virgin *Doctor Who* RPG *Time Lord*, and two *Robin of Sherwood* gamebooks).

In fantasy terms, the aforementioned Leiber stories, as well as an unhealthy dose of Michael Moorcock – not overtly, but in terms of the triumph of mood over structure (and I'm being unfair to Moorcock, and overpraising myself, there, I think).

How did you come to meet Steve Williams?
I think I first met him at a games convention when he was introduced to me as the editor of *Black Sun*, the Games Workshop (GW) mail order 'zine' that gave some coverage to fanzines – I was a fanzine editor at the time. It was probably Ian Marsh who introduced him to me, as I had known Ian for a while through his fanzine

WARLOCK 7
THE FIGHTING FANTASY MAGAZINE
95p
Oracles & Auguries – Latest Gamebook News
The Temple of Testing – Challenging New Solo Adventure

WARLOCK 8
THE FIGHTING FANTASY MAGAZINE
95p
ARCANE ARCHIVES
THE TOWER OF HADES
A Multi-Player Quest

WARLOCK 9
THE FIGHTING FANTASY MAGAZINE
95p
An FF Deathbird
FORTRESS THRONGAR
A Race Against Time
MONSTER CONVERSIONS
Adapting Gamebook Nasties

Right: The three issues of *Warlock* Paul was credited on.

DragonLords, and Ian went on to work for Games Workshop. Subsequently, I got a job at Games Workshop myself, and lo and behold, found myself not only editing *White Dwarf* with Ian, but also doing *Warlock* with Steve. That was how he and I started to write *Fighting Fantasy*-related material together.

What were the contents and aims of your fanzine?
It was the natural extension of my involvement with role-playing games. When I got into RPGs there was effectively no overt difference between 'fan' and 'pro' material. I bought copies of *Trollcrusher*; my friends bought copies of *The Underworld Oracle* or *The Beholder* and these were, to us, as 'authentic' and 'official' as anything published by TSR. All we cared about was whether they were useful and improved our game. Did they have interesting new character classes or monsters? Did they contain good scenarios? And (increasingly more important) did they make us think and help us have better games?

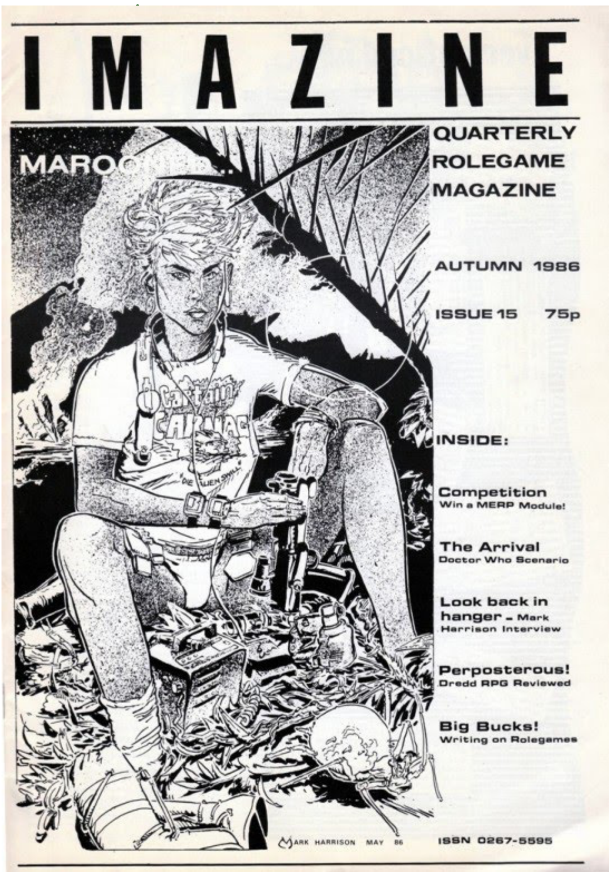
I started contributing to *Trollcrusher* while I was still at school, writing mainly about *Chivalry & Sorcery*, the game I preferred to *Dungeons & Dragons*. From there, I connected with the world of fanzine publishing. At Dragonmeet I met up with the editors of *DragonLords* (Mike Lewis, Marc Gascoigne and Ian Marsh), whose irreverent approach to the zine greatly appealed to me (and which spawned the 'Ecology...' series in *The Dragon*: the original was, of course, a pisstake). I wrote for their zine, as well as several others.

At university I shared a house with Matt Williams, who edited *Tales from Tanelorn*, a zine I admired greatly. So almost inevitably, I started my own. Originally, it was mainly a pisstake. Hence the name: 'The Pete Tamlyn Fanclub Newsletter'. The title changed every issue until issue 7. Having spent ages producing a mock-up of the *Imagine* magazine (the TSR (UK) prozine) logo, rendered as *Imazine*, I couldn't bear to chuck it away, so I stuck with *Imazine*.

At this point, I was still interested in taking the piss, but my other goal was to set up a genuine discussion forum. My inspiration was a zine run by Brian Dolton (his name had been on my second issue) called *Death's Dance Taken Slowly*. But Brian had folded that and started *Lokasenna*. So I figured there was room for a discussion-based zine.

This was, for me, always the raison d'etre of *Imazine*. Sadly, my readership thought differently.

The zine also contained polemical essays, theory articles and more pisstakes. When I got the job at GW, editing such a zine was not thought of as being compatible with my job, so I handed the zine over the Matt


IMAZINE
MAROO
QUARTERLY ROLEGAME MAGAZINE
AUTUMN 1986
ISSUE 15 75p
INSIDE:
Competition
Win a MERP Module!
The Arrival
Doctor Who Scenario
Look back in hanger - Mark Harrison Interview
Perposterous!
Dredd RPG Reviewed
Big Bucks!
Writing on Rolegames
MARK HARRISON MAY 86
ISSN 0267-5595

Above: Issue #15 (1986) of Paul's fanzine *Imazine*. Opposite: Paul's two *Warlock* mini adventures.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

FIGHTING FANTASY

Gamebooks
Magehunter (1995)
The Crimson Tide (1992)
Black Vein Prophecy (1990)*
Slaves of the Abyss (1988)*

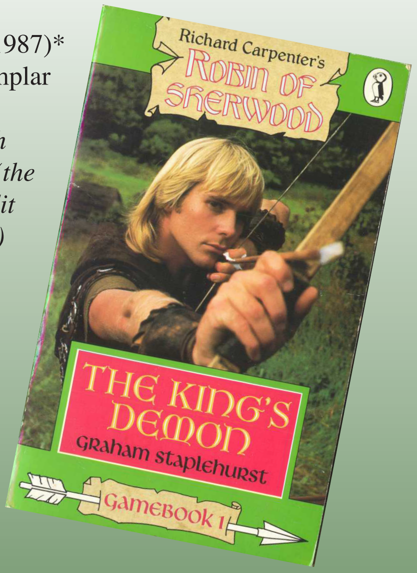
Mini Adventures
The Dreaming Sands (Warlock #13, 1986)
Deathtrap on Legs (Warlock #7, 1985)*

Other
The Riddling Reaver (1986)*
** co-written with Steve Williams*

Editorial Assistant
Warlock #7~9 (1985~86)

OTHER GAMEBOOKS

Robin of Sherwood
(Puffin Books)
The King's Demon (1987)*
The Sword of the Templar (1987)*
** both co-written with Graham Staplehurst (the individual books credit only one author each)*


Richard Carpenter's
ROBIN OF SHERWOOD
THE KING'S DEMON
Graham Staplehurst
GAMEBOOK 1

Wiliams and Dave Stone (the latter being me). I think Matt expected me to do more for the zine, but actually his issue, aptly enough number 13, has always been my favourite issue.

I took the zine back after leaving GW and used it as a soapboax for things I believed about role-playing: the idea of a 'narrative approach' (where the aim was a satisfying experience rather than the mechanical reward of character advancement), and Punk RPG (in other words, that gamers should be making their own games to suit their own needs).

DEATHTRAP ON LEGS

by Paul Mason and Steve Williams

A multi-player adventure for 3-6 players, following on from Ian Livingstone's *Deathtrap Dungeon*, and using the *Fighting Fantasy* rules.

In the face of apathy and lack of money the zine sort of scrunched to a halt some time in the late 80s, having won the Diana Jones Award for a scam involving the idea that *DragonLords* had continued as a hidden 'invitation-only' zine (you won't find that bit of history on the Diana Jones web site, though). Subsequently, in Japan, I restarted it, even though it should have been evident to me that its mode of discussion had been rendered obsolete by the Internet. But it trundled on for another 18 or so issues, attracting contributions from a variety of people, but never quite getting the volume of response I wanted to make the discussion work. One of many reasons for this was probably that I believed in an 'edited' letters page. I called it Colloquy, and the idea was that it should be like an active discussion, where people had their comments interleaved. That was how it had been done in *Death's Dance Taken Slowly*, but many people, accustomed to the freedom to have everything reproduced that the Internet gave (in the pre-Twitter age), didn't like it. I was an 'immoral butcher', in fact. [This of course means that I will not be offended by you slicing massive chunks out of my overlong—]

WORKING WITH THE WARLOCK – HOW TO BE AN EDITORIAL ASSISTANT IN TEN EASY STEPS

THE DREAMING SANDS

Multi-player nightmares by Paul Mason

You came onto the *Warlock* staff for three issues across 1985/86. What brought this about?
After graduating, I got a job with GW as an 'editorial assistant' (I had to have that title, because Ian Marsh, who was actually the editor of *White Dwarf*, was billed as 'assistant editor'). GW published *White Dwarf*, *Warlock* and *The Good Games Guide*, so I basically helped out on all three.

The reason I only worked on three issues was that six months after I joined GW, the company upped sticks and moved to Nottingham. I decided not to go. Steve W made the same decision. Marc Gascoigne did move to Nottingham, which was why he took over as editor of *Warlock*.

Do you recall what your duties mainly involved?
Copy editing, writing letters to contributors, making stuff up, answering the phone, playing pool in the warehouse, watching in horror as Steve Williams ruined Ian Livingstone's plush carpet, staving off the nefarious demands of advertising manager Jon Sutherland, that sort of thing. My favourite was probably editing the *Warlock* letters page.

You wrote *Deathtrap on Legs* as the first adventure to be based on Steve Jackson's multi-player *Fighting Fantasy* book. How did you end up with the brief?
Not really a brief. More a:
Steve: 'Shit, we've got a few pages to fill in the next issue. What shall we do?'
Paul: 'We could do a role-playing scenario. What do you think?'
Steve: 'Yeah, why not.'

Why did you go with a follow up to *Deathtrap Dungeon*?
I suspect because *Deathtrap Dungeon* was widely regarded at the time as the most popular *Fighting Fantasy* book.

In the final issue you published *The Dreaming Sands*, a prequel to *The Riddling Reaver* published the same month. Was it your choice to make it a prequel?
Oh yes. I think. I honestly can't remember how that came about though. I could have pitched it to Marc, or he could have suggested it to me.

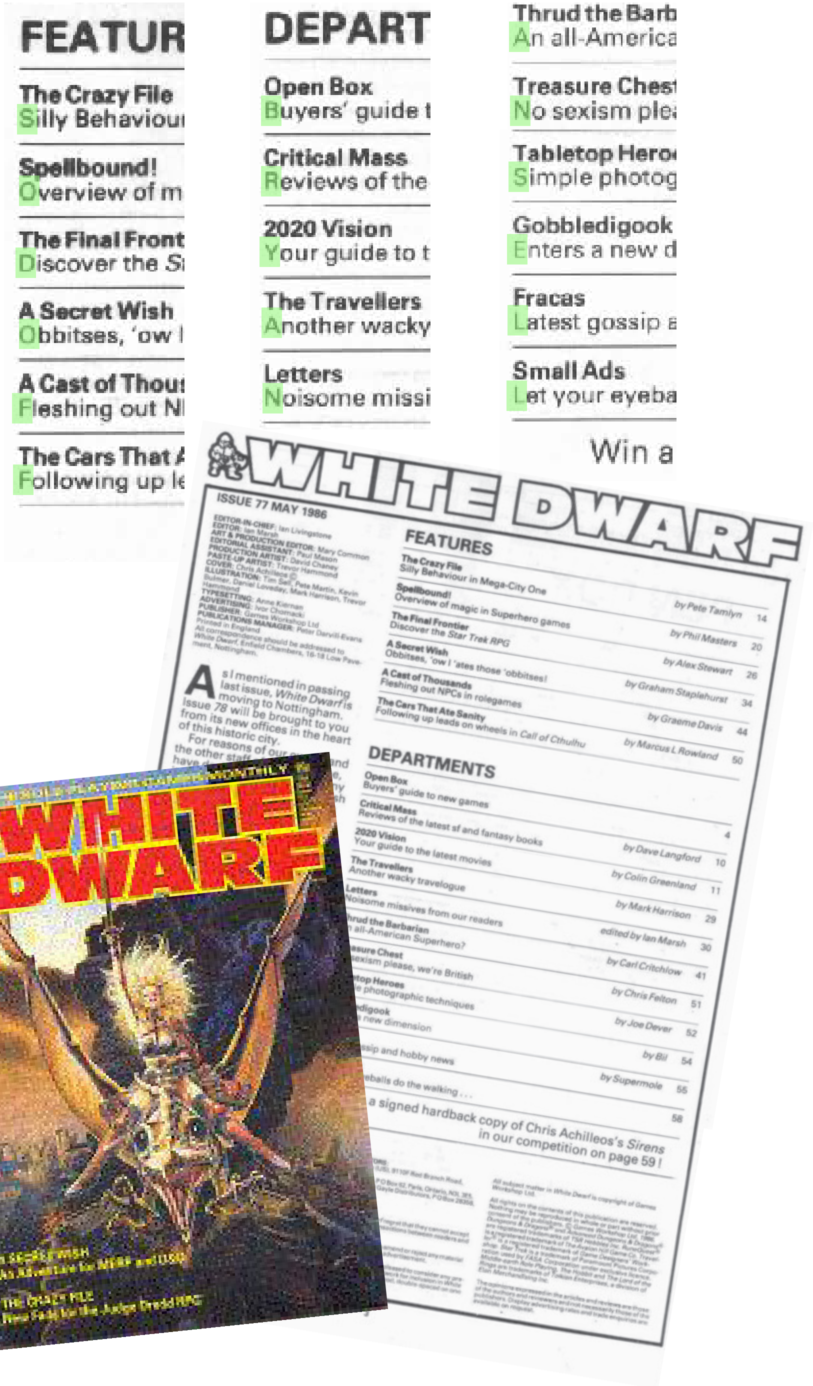
Which of the two adventures are you happiest with and why?
Neither, because I don't think either of them shows proper respect for the readers. *Deathtrap on Legs* is probably preferable because it was at least an honest response to a predicament ('We've got a few pages to fill!'). With *The Dreaming Sands* I was trying to be knowing, and clever, and Moorcockian, which is always a recipe for pretentious bollocks, isn't it? Mind you, it was the origin of the Maijem-Nosoth, the Lovecraftian Jamie Thomson, so I suppose it wasn't all bad.

Why did you not stay longer on the magazine?
As I mentioned above, Bryan Ansell, the Managing Director of

GW, decided to close down Games Workshop Publications, which was effectively the remains of the London operation. Those of us who still worked for it didn't much like this, especially Steve Williams, who'd bought a flat based on the understanding that GW publications was staying in London, and Peter Darvill-Evans, our boss, who would be losing his position. But the feeling was shared by many, which was why the final issue of *White Dwarf* produced in London, issue 77, had an acronym concealed in the description of articles on its contents page: 'Sod Off Bryan Ansell'. Amazingly, someone at Nottingham actually spotted that about one day after the mag was published.

I considered moving to Nottingham (actually managed to cadge a lift up there in the back of Ian Livingstone's Porsche – a very uncomfortable way to travel), but they were basically saying I would be made redundant and then re-employed, which felt a bit odd. Moreover I wasn't too keen on the direction the company was moving. And me and Steve W had just got a contract for *The Riddling Reaver*, so I decided to chance it.

At the time you worked there, how was the *Fighting Fantasy* range perceived by those working at Games Workshop and on *White Dwarf*?
Interesting question. Very difficult for me to answer for the others (bear in mind that apart from the production and advertising staff, *White Dwarf* was me and Ian Marsh, while in another office I worked with Steve W and Marc G). As far as *White Dwarf* was concerned, though, I think that *Fighting Fantasy* wasn't really much to do with us. We didn't view it as role-playing, yet it was clearly 'derivative' of *Dungeons & Dragons*. But I don't want to misrepresent Ian. I actually can't ever remember having a conversation with him about *Fighting Fantasy*! Of course, when I went to the other office and put my *Warlock* hat on, it was different. In the short time I worked on *Warlock*, my own attitude changed. This was probably thanks to Steve W and Marc. I think Marc was already involved in *Fighting Fantasy* by that stage, and Steve W was perhaps more likely to be sympathetic to the idea anyway, since he had already worked on the GW computer game (what was it called? Tower of Despair?) which had some characteristics in common with *Fighting Fantasy*. Working with those two was fun, and I started to lose my snobbish disregard and realise that *Fighting Fantasy*, too, was fun. I suppose Jamie helped, too, with "Omens & Auguries".



FEATUR
The Crazy File
Silly Behaviou
Spellbound!
Overview of m
The Final Front
Discover the S
A Secret Wish
Obbitses, 'ow I
A Cast of Thou
Fleshing out N
The Cars That A
Following up le

DEPART
Open Box
Buyers' guide t
Critical Mass
Reviews of the
2020 Vision
Your guide to t
The Travellers
Another wacky
Letters
Noisome missi

Thrud the Barb
An all-America
Treasure Ches
No sexism ple
Tabletop Hero
Simple photog
Gobbledigook
Enters a new d
Fracas
Latest gossip a
Small Ads
Let your eyeba
Win a

WHITE DWARF

ISSUE 77 MAY 1986

As I mentioned in passing last issue, *White Dwarf* is moving to Nottingham. Issue 78 will be brought to you from its new offices in the heart of this historic city.

For reasons of our … the other staff … have …

FEATURES

The Crazy File
Silly Behaviour in Mega-City One — by Pete Tamlyn 14
Spellbound!
Overview of magic in Superhero games — by Phil Masters 20
The Final Frontier
Discover the *Star Trek RPG* — by Alex Stewart 26
A Secret Wish
Obbitses, 'ow I 'ates those 'obbitses! — by Graham Staplehurst 34
A Cast of Thousands
Fleshing out NPCs in rolegames — by Graeme Davis 44
The Cars That Ate Sanity
Following up leads on wheels in *Call of Cthulhu* — by Marcus L Rowland 50

DEPARTMENTS

Open Box
Buyers' guide to new games — 4
Critical Mass
Reviews of the latest sf and fantasy books — by Dave Langford 10
2020 Vision
Your guide to the latest movies — by Colin Greenland 11
The Travellers
Another wacky travelogue — by Mark Harrison 29
Letters
Noisome missives from our readers — edited by Ian Marsh 30
hrud the Barbarian
n all-American Superhero? — by Carl Critchlow 41
asure Chest
sexism please, we're British — by Chris Felton 51
top Heroes
le photographic techniques — by Joe Dever 52
digook
new dimension — by Bil 54
ssip and hobby news — by Supermole 55
eballs do the walking … — 58

a signed hardback copy of Chris Achilleos's *Sirens* in our competition on page 59!

Above: Issue #77 of *White Dwarf*, the infamous contents page and the contents in detail (highlight added).

So my perception of *Fighting Fantasy* changed for the better over those six months. But trying to get back to the rest of GW, I think that *Fighting Fantasy* was at a distance. Some of them were hoping to get into it themselves (and of course some did, or wrote other series). Others just viewed it as an 'offshoot' of the hobby that they didn't happen to be involved in.

RIDDLE ME THIS – RPG GAMEBOOKING FOR THE WORLD OF TITAN

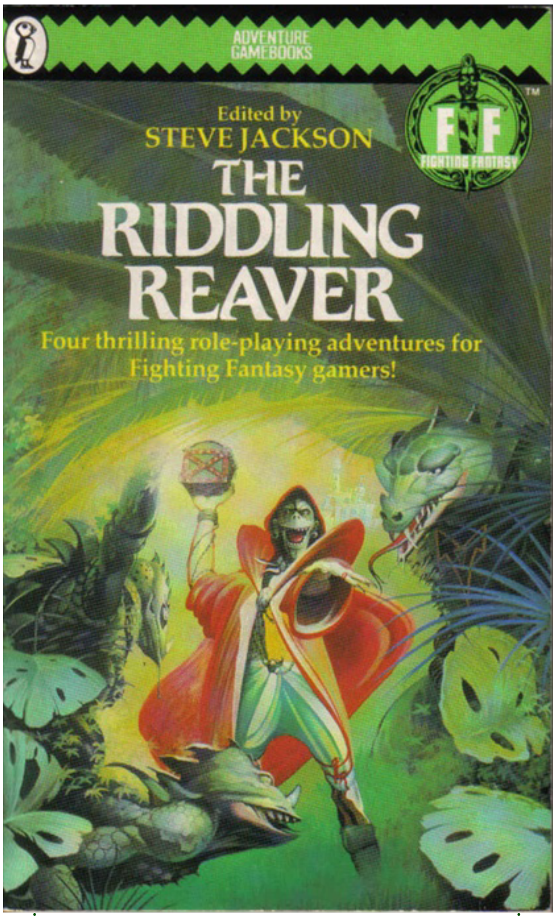
How did the writing job of *The Riddling Reaver* come about?
Steve Jackson came into the office one day (and this was sufficiently rare

that angels blew their trumpets in the Heavens while a vision of a golden hedgehog appeared suspended above the Serpentine) and told Steve W and me that he was doing a collection of scenarios as a follow-up to *Fighting Fantasy – The Role-playing Game*. The idea was to have four adventures, so would we like to pitch him one? This may or may not have been connected to the appearance of *Deathtrap on Legs* in *Warlock*. I'm inclined to plump for 'not' myself.

Steve W and I picked ourselves up from the floor and dusted off our foreheads, before resolving to pitch four adventures. Why not? The worst that could happen was that Steve J would turn down all four.

We very rapidly came back to Steve J with our pitch for the whole book. For whatever reason (and I like to think that it's because Steve J is a man of taste as well as judgment), he accepted it. And with his okay, it was okay with Puffin. To this day, I don't know if he actually got around to asking anyone else (we were very fast with our pitch), and therefore whether or not we muscled anyone else out of the way. Perhaps some aggrieved reader will be able to enlighten me on that?

What was your original conception of the Riddling Reaver and how has he evolved across your books?
As I've said elsewhere, the original conception of the Riddling Reaver was a piece of the utmost cynicism. I sat in an East London Line tube at Whitechapel, as I often did in those days, and I thought to myself 'What's *Fighting Fantasy* all about, then, eh?' And the answer I came up with was, more or less: 'Theft/violence, puzzles and silly word games'. Choosing alliteration for the latter, and beginning my career-spanning habit of nicking from good bits of other media, I combined the Riddler from Batman with the slightly more literary 'Reaver' and there he was. Actually, in my mind, the character already existed: he was Jaiphrai Aa'cha from *Deathtrap on Legs*. Might be able to get away with that name in a magazine, but it wasn't going to wash in a book...



I wouldn't say he has evolved across my books. He evolved during the writing of *The Riddling Reaver* when I started to think about him more as a character, rather than a description of *Fighting Fantasy*. And I found that although he'd been set up as the villain, I didn't see it that way. In a way – and you can see this in the illustration in *Slaves of the Abyss* – he's like a comical version of V, from *V for Vendetta*. What he does is undoubtedly questionable at best, and probably downright wrong. On the other hand, you can see that he's motivated by a powerful resistance to totalising modes of thought. In that sense, I will pretentiously claim that he is a post-modernist hero.

Steve and Ian make cameo appearances in one of the pictures for *The Riddling Reaver*. Have you ever been temped to make such an appearance in your own works?
No. The humour of having Steve and Ian in a picture in a book derives from the fact that they are known to the *Fighting Fantasy* audience, as their photos appear on the books. To put myself into one of the pictures would have been mere ego, a rather pointless 'in-joke'. And while I've certainly been accused of egotism, I wouldn't go that far.

In-jokes, of course, I do. The Maijem-Nosoth was one. The dedication of *The Crimson Tide* was another: it appears to be dedicated to a minor character in the book. In fact, since the character in the book is based on my wife, the dedication is actually to my wife. And I think one of the *Robin of Sherwood* books is dedicated to 'Hubi Kisz', which is a very obscure in-joke based on an accusation that a bunch of fanzine editors in the 80s were something of a 'clique' (though the person who made the accusation misspelled it: hence the in-joke morphed 'hobby clique' into 'hooby quiche').

Why was there not a further volume of multi-player games after this title?
Because, I suppose, the sales didn't warrant it. Maybe Steve W and I should have pitched something? Trouble, is, role-playing was always very much a minority activity in comparison to *Fighting Fantasy*. Do you know David Mitchell – the writer rather than the comedian? I met him a number of years ago, before I'd heard of him or read any of his books, and he said he'd read *Fighting Fantasy* as a kid – sadly none of my books, though. *Fighting Fantasy* was a very large phenomenon of its time.

Dungeons & Dragons may have been big but – and I think this concerned Puffin – it's much harder to make solid money from role-playing game supplements than from books like *Fighting Fantasy*.

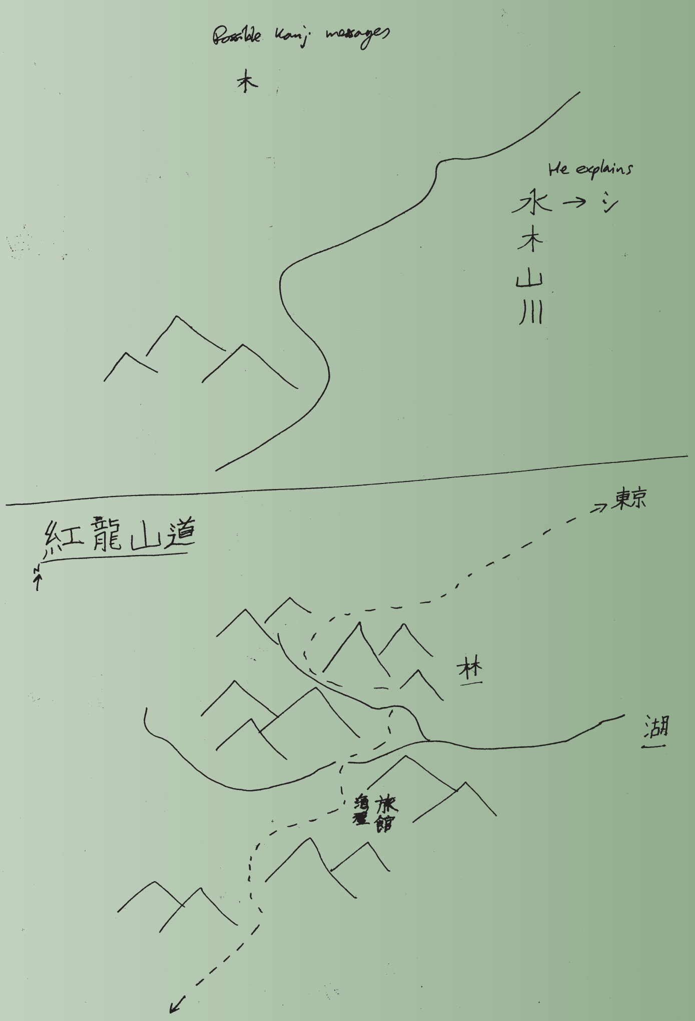
How well do you think the multi-player version caught on among RPG players?
Not very well at all. Many RPG players were snobs about *Fighting Fantasy*. I should know, I was one myself. The aim of *Fighting Fantasy – The Role-playing Game* was to attract *Fighting Fantasy* readers to RPGs, not RPG players to *Fighting Fantasy*.

Continued on page 20.

RED DRAGON PASS

BY PAUL MASON

A man cannot live under the same sky as his father's murderer
– Kong Qiu (better known as Confucius)



Above: Paul Mason's hand drawn map for *Red Dragon Pass*.

PROLOGUE

'Li Pang! Li Pang! Your father's dead!' comes Po Jun's breathless cry. Your eyes snap open from the half-doze in which you had been whiling away another lazy summer afternoon. With your father away on his mission to stamp out the bandits of Red Dragon Pass you have had little pressure to keep up your education, and as often as not you've spent whole days relaxing. Now three words shatter your idyll.

'How..? When..? Wh..?' you start firing questions at Po Jun, your loyal family retainer, but he waves his arms and shakes his head.

'Forgive me. I didn't stay to hear the details,' he apologises.

Grabbing a black Fanyuan cap to lend a modicum of respectability to your appearance, you race out of your family mansion and down the dusty street to the yamen—the magistrate's court. As you charge through the gate, you can hear the sound of uproar from the great hall. Inside, a crowd of townsfolk has already assembled, and, despite the best efforts of the constables, are pushing this way and that, cursing and muttering. Amid all the hubbub, you crane your head to try to see the magistrate, but there are too many people in the way. You start to thread your way through the crowd, but with the sonorous clang of a gong, the sergeant of the constables silences the crowd. The magistrate stands to make an announcement, and for the first time you can see who he was talking to. Huang Lu! That good-for-nothing brute only got on the expedition through the influence of his father-in-law Prefect, the magistrate's superior.

'The expedition to Red Dragon Pass has failed,' announces the magistrate, his voice wavering slightly as his eyes lock briefly with yours. 'There are no survivors apart from Huang Lu, and he reports that the failure of the mission was due to treachery on the part of Major Li Ming.'

You cannot believe your ears. The crowd, too, are shocked. Murmurs of dissent grow around you. Your father was a popular man in town, generous with his wealth. The murmurs are silenced by another crash on the gong from the sergeant. The magistrate speaks again, quickly, as if he wishes to get the unpleasant task over with.

'A case of such seriousness must be referred to the Prefectural Court. In the meantime the family of Li Ming will be taken into custody...'

There is a roar from the crowd. 'The family of Li Ming' means you, of course, since your mother died when you were born. If the case is seen by the Prefectural Court, then it will be judged by Huang Lu's father-in-law—hardly a disinterested party! Several townspeople try to obstruct the constables as they shove their way toward you, but ultimately it is futile. No one can oppose the representatives of the law. Their power comes down from the Son of Heaven, the Emperor Himself.

The next few weeks pass as if in a dream. Through the influence of many well-wishers, you are quickly released on bail from your yamen cell. However, at the Prefectural Court your father's influence evaporates faster than dew on a summer's morning. Huang Lu testifies that your father threw in his lot with the Bandit King, leading the entire expedition into a fatal trap. With no other witnesses available, there is little that can be mounted by way of a defence. You try to persuade the more notable citizens of the region to appear as character witnesses on your father's behalf, but they all decline, refusing to meet your accusing eyes. You deliver an impassioned plea in support of your father's reputation, reciting his many battle honours; the Prefect airily dismisses this as 'Inadmissible testimony, owing to filial bias'. You distribute money lavishly among the clerks of the court in the hope of some favourable action, but all in vain.

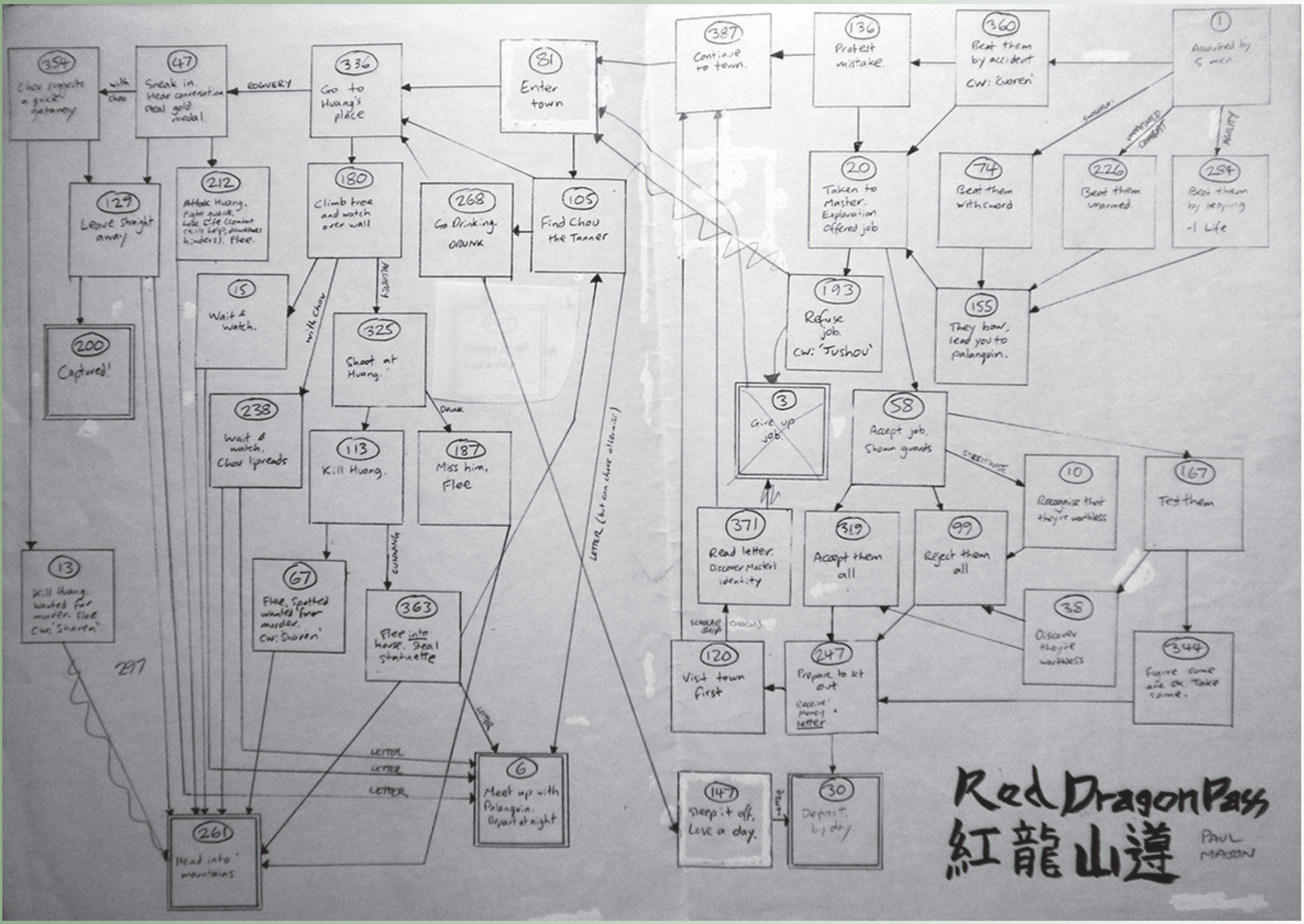
Within a month you have become the only child of a convicted traitor.

The family residence, with its beautiful wood-panelled guest hall and immaculately kept gardens, is confiscated by the Prefect. You are given a beating of twenty strokes 'to impart a proper sense of obedience'. You can bear the shame no longer. Bidding farewell to your friends, you collect together your few remaining possessions and head out of town. With nothing more than a vague idea of making your fortune in the Southern Capital, you stride bravely towards the future.

NOW CHOOSE ONE OF THESE CHARACTERS:

The Just Bandit, The Mystical Hermit, The Crafty Hunter, The Wily Merchant, The Shaolin Monk, The Diligent Scholar, The Hardy Soldier

Text © Paul Mason, 2012


354 Chou suggests a quick getaway
with Chou
47 Sneak in. Hear conversation steal gold medal
ROGUERY
336 Go to Huang's place
81 Enter town
387 Continue to town.
136 Protest mistake.
360 Beat them by accident CW: 'Guoren'
1 Assaulted by 5 men
129 Leave straight away
212 Attack Huang. Fight guards. Lose Life (combat skills help, dmwelness hinders). Flee.
180 Climb tree and watch over wall
268 Go Drinking. DRUNK
105 Find Chou the Tanner
20 Taken to Master. Explanation Offered job
74 Beat them with sword
226 Beat them unarmed.
284 Beat them by leaping -1 Life
UNARMED COMBAT
AGILITY
15 Wait & watch.
with Chou
AGILITY
200 Captured!
325 Shoot at Huang.
193 Refuse job. CW: 'Jushou'
155 They bow; lead you to palanquin.
238 Wait & watch. Chou 'spreads
113 Kill Huang.
187 Miss him, Flee
DRINK
3 Give up job.
58 Accept job. Shown guards
STREETWISE
10 Recognise that they're worthless
167 Test them
LETTER (but can chose otherwise)
CUNNING
13 Kill Huang. wanted for murder. Flee CW: 'Sharen'
297
67 Flee, Spotted wanted for murder. CW: 'Sharen'
363 Flee into house. Steal statuette
371 Read letter. Discover Master's identity
319 Accept them all
99 Reject them all
38 Discover they're worthless
SCHOLARSHIP
CHARLES
120 Visit town first
247 Prepare to set out Receive: Money + letter
344 Figure some are OK Take some.
LETTER
LETTER
LETTER
LETTER
6 Meet up with Palanquin. Depart at night
261 Head into mountains
147 Sleep it off. Lose a day.
30 Depart by day
Red Dragon Pass
紅龍山道
PAUL MASON

Above: Part of Paul's flow diagram of events for *Red Dragon Pass*.

Did you ever give any thought to revising it for Marc Gascoigne's later *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* system?
I didn't, now you mention it. I guess it didn't occur to me that Marc and Pete (remember, Marc co-wrote *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* with Pete Tamlyn with whom, I might add, Ian Marsh and I used to regularly game when we were at GW) would be interested in that.

Would you consider doing so now for the 2nd edition *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* system from Arion Games?
If they made me an offer and Steve Williams was up for it: sure.

ALTERNATIVE GAMEBOOKING – WRITING FOR OTHER WORLDS

Between *The Riddling Reaver* and *Slaves of the Abyss* you penned a couple of *Robin of Sherwood* gamebooks with Graham Staplehurst. How did the commission for these come about?
Graham Staplehurst, basically. He'd done a lot of research for his Robin Hood role-playing supplement for ICE. And he loved *Robin of Sherwood* (didn't we all?). So he basically put the idea to Puffin. And having Marc and me lined up as series authors helped to sell it, I think, since we were already 'in' on *Fighting Fantasy*. I think I wrote *Slaves* before the *Robin of Sherwood* books, though, whatever the publishing order may have been.

What was it like trying to write a gamebook to match a television series?
Fun, in a way. Mainly because Richard Carpenter had produced a continuity guide (called 'the Bible') for the series, which we got to see: and it was a role-playing gamer's dream!

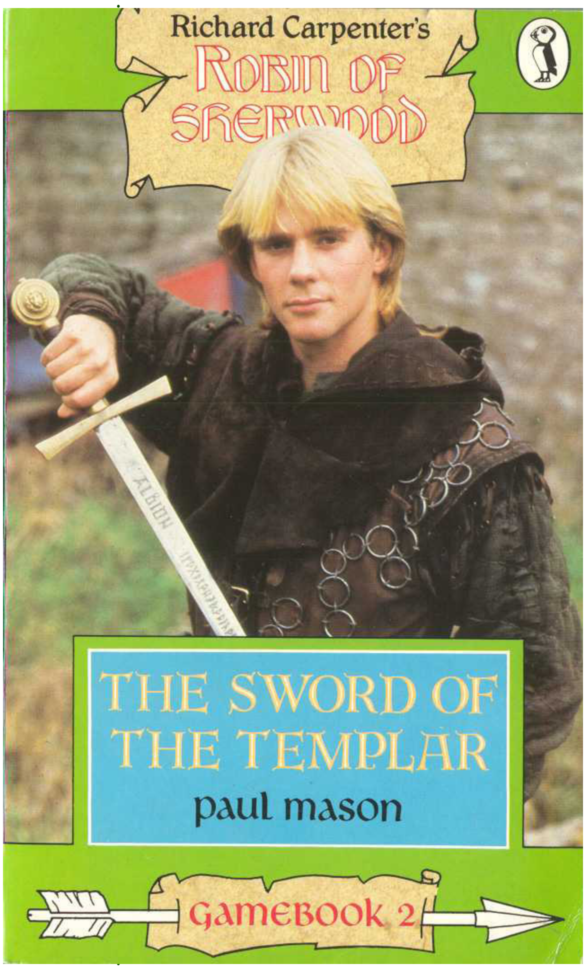
I mean, writing the gamebook was a bit like getting to actually write for the TV show, so it's the fanfic writer's dream. Looking back, I recognise that my characterisation was superficial. But at the time, as I say, it was tough, but fun.

How happy are you with the artwork?
I'm not really a man to ask about artwork. I'm a lot more tolerant about it than many people. I like Russ Nicholson's work generally (and I'm terribly guilty that my failure to register my books for library cash deprived him of some money), and I thought there were some pictures in those books that were fantastic, and one or two that didn't quite work.

Was there a plan for further titles?
Of course there was a plan! That's why Marc was listed as a series author. Unfortunately the TV series was cancelled, and Puffin were cooling on gamebooks generally. We knew we were stuffed when, in the year that two Robin Hood movies came out (the Costner one, and the more interesting one that wasn't such a big hit), Puffin wouldn't even remind bookshops that those two titles were available.

But the plan was not only to write more gamebooks, but to include a role-playing game in the series. That's why the system was a complex as it was.

Looking back now, what are your thoughts on the two published titles?
The system was too complex, of course. And we went way over the top with the Celtic mythology and evil magicians. And the 'murder your darlings' part of me suspects that the bits we thought were really neat – like scenes of the outlaws bantering among themselves – weren't nearly as much fun to read as they were to write. As for the gamebook aspect, I don't recall doing anything particularly noteworthy with it.
I have a vague recollection that I disagreed with some ways in which Graham wanted to approach doing gamebooks, but I can't remember what they were. It was odd for me, working with Graham, because we did it the 'normal' way: ie parcelling out the work after a discussion, and then writing bits alone. Whereas Steve W and I actually used to co-write: I mean both sit at the computer together and compose the book sentence by sentence together. Which I now realise is almost unheard of.



What can you tell us about *Red Dragon Pass* (a title planned for the *Virtual Reality* gamebook series)?
Now there's a question! My master work. It would have been the best gamebook ever!

Well, actually, of course, it wouldn't. But I'd like to think only because *Heart of Ice*, in the same series, was so good.

You can see from *The Crimson Tide* that I wanted to write a full-on period Chinese gamebook. *Red Dragon Pass* was it. With *Magehunter* I deliberately took *Warlock* and riffed on it; similarly *Red Dragon Pass* drew its seed from a very early Jackie Chan movie called *The Magnificent Bodyguards*. Very odd movie: actually, like the Jin Yong story *Flying Fox of the Snowy Mountain* it ends right in the middle of a combat. Anyway, it gave me a very basic thread to start with. The hero (named Li Pang) was going to start off having his or her father discredited (see pages 18 & 19). So, like *The Crimson Tide*, there was a revenge element in there. Apart from that it was an excuse to run through loads of the Hong Kong movie tropes of the time. The bit that I remember most clearly, though, was that at least some of the 'death' paragraphs were going to lead to a sequence where the reader is 'reincarnated' in 1920s China. And then there would be a chunk of the story set there, involving the real-world warlord politics I'd been reading about. And it was going to be possible to 'go back' into the original story as well, though all I can remember was that it involved a Chinese Dragon in a street festival.

I only wrote the intro and about 50 paragraphs: enough for the pitch, basically. And then the *Virtual Reality* series was cancelled.

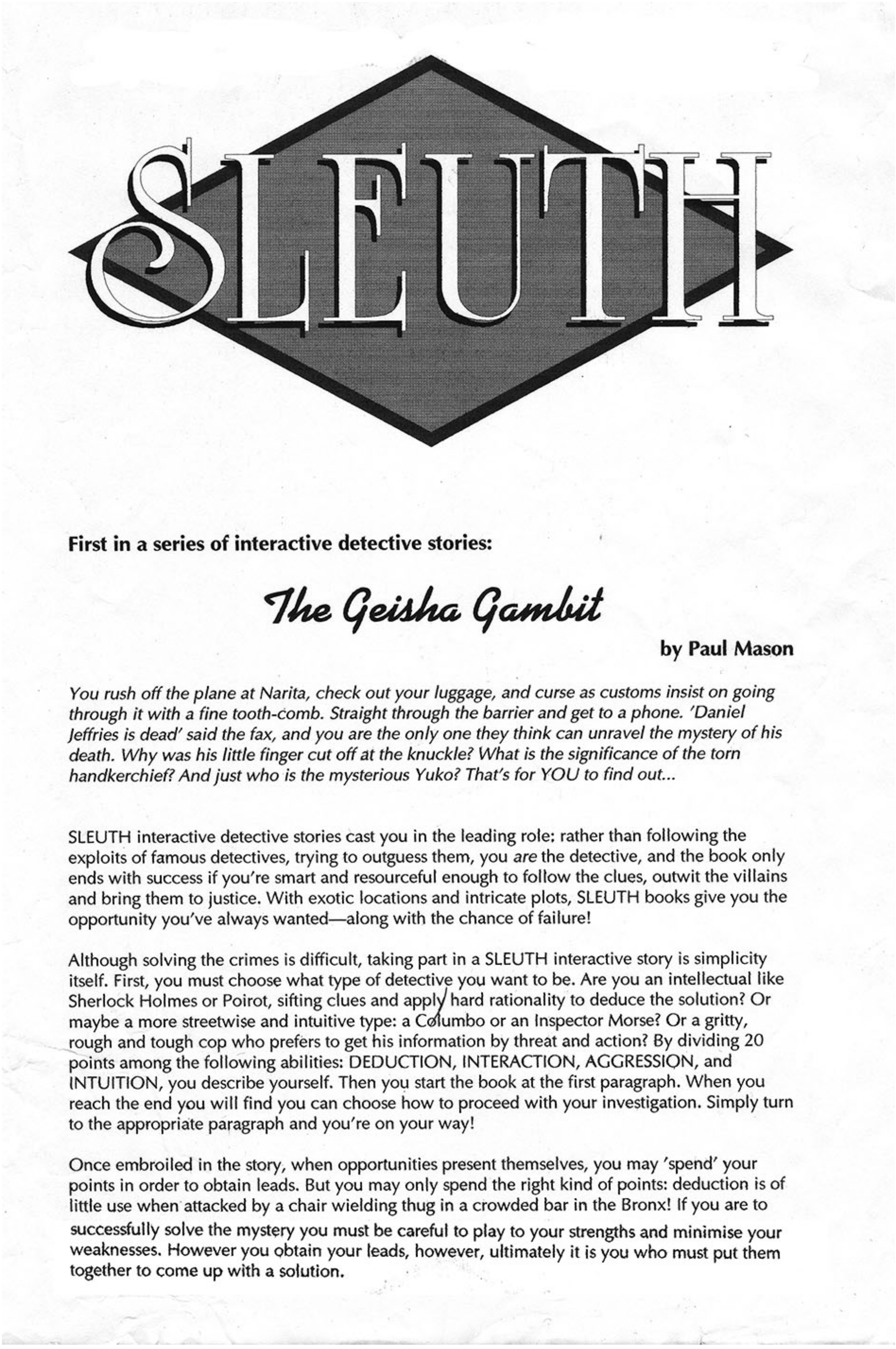
What was the plan with the *Panurgic Adventures* series?
When I republished *Heart of Ice*, obviously I hoped that it would be tremendously successful, and I'd be able to republish the others, then finish *Red Dragon Pass* and publish that. Unfortunately the economics just didn't work out.

It was a bit of a hobbyist thing, too, as I actually enjoy designing books. But it would have lost me a lot of money!

Is this a series you plan to resurrect?
Nope.

CURRENT EVENTS

You are based in Japan now. When and how did this come about?
It's a very romantic story. I met a Japanese woman called Keiko in 1990 after a gig we both went to (Jesus Jones were top of the bill, supported by Ned's Atomic Dustbin and a new band called Blur). We fell in love. She returned to Japan, and I then contrived to find a way to go out to Japan the next year. Since there weren't too many openings for English magazine editors, and I wouldn't be able to get a visa for just writing books (not that that ever sustained me financially anyway) I settled on English teaching. That ended up leading to a position at a university. And here I am 21 years later, married to Keiko, working in a Zen Buddhist university and having bought a house in Japan.



SLEUTH

First in a series of interactive detective stories:

The Geisha Gambit

by Paul Mason

You rush off the plane at Narita, check out your luggage, and curse as customs insist on going through it with a fine tooth-comb. Straight through the barrier and get to a phone. 'Daniel Jeffries is dead' said the fax, and you are the only one they think can unravel the mystery of his death. Why was his little finger cut off at the knuckle? What is the significance of the torn handkerchief? And just who is the mysterious Yuko? That's for YOU to find out...

SLEUTH interactive detective stories cast you in the leading role: rather than following the exploits of famous detectives, trying to outguess them, you *are* the detective, and the book only ends with success if you're smart and resourceful enough to follow the clues, outwit the villains and bring them to justice. With exotic locations and intricate plots, SLEUTH books give you the opportunity you've always wanted—along with the chance of failure!

Although solving the crimes is difficult, taking part in a SLEUTH interactive story is simplicity itself. First, you must choose what type of detective you want to be. Are you an intellectual like Sherlock Holmes or Poirot, sifting clues and apply hard rationality to deduce the solution? Or maybe a more streetwise and intuitive type: a Columbo or an Inspector Morse? Or a gritty, rough and tough cop who prefers to get his information by threat and action? By dividing 20 points among the following abilities: DEDUCTION, INTERACTION, AGGRESSION, and INTUITION, you describe yourself. Then you start the book at the first paragraph. When you reach the end you will find you can choose how to proceed with your investigation. Simply turn to the appropriate paragraph and you're on your way!

Once embroiled in the story, when opportunities present themselves, you may 'spend' your points in order to obtain leads. But you may only spend the right kind of points: deduction is of little use when attacked by a chair wielding thug in a crowded bar in the Bronx! If you are to successfully solve the mystery you must be careful to play to your strengths and minimise your weaknesses. However you obtain your leads, however, ultimately it is you who must put them together to come up with a solution.

Above: Paul's pitch document for a proposed gamebook series entitled *Sleuth*.

What chiefly occupies your time now, both work and hobby-wise?
I work full time at a university, so the tedious answer is teaching and research. Hobby-wise I wish I had the time to do something. I haven't had a regular role-playing game since before my son was born 10 years ago. There was a time when I got into font design and typographic design generally, and I still do that as a work sideline (I'm production editor on an academic journal, and I do some publishing consultancy) but no longer as much in the way of a hobby.

One of my more enjoyable occasional work sidelines is doing voice-over work for Japanese TV or promotional videos. I've done training videos for Mazda sales and technical staff in Europe, that sort of thing.

Part Two of this interview, covering Paul Mason's Fighting Fantasy *gamebooks will appear in issue 11.*

FF

FF MINI ADVENTURE

HAND OF FATE

by Kieran Coghlan

Illustrated by Robertson Sondoh Jr.

INSTRUCTIONS

To play this adventure you will need two dice, a pencil and an eraser. There is an *Adventure Sheet* on page 25, on which to record your scores. You are advised either to record your scores on the *Adventure Sheet* in pencil or to make photocopies of the sheet for use in future adventures.

Skill, Stamina, and Luck

Before embarking upon your quest, you need to know more about yourself. First you should determine your *Initial* SKILL, STAMINA and LUCK scores.

SKILL reflects your agility and general fighting expertise. Roll one die. Add 6 to this number and enter the total in the SKILL box on your *Adventure Sheet*.

STAMINA denotes your general health and fitness. Your determination and your will to survive are all reflected in this score. Roll two dice. Add 12 to the total rolled and enter this total in the STAMINA box.

LUCK indicates how naturally lucky you are. Roll one die and add 6 to this number. Record your total LUCK score in the appropriate box on the *Adventure Sheet*.

Your SKILL, STAMINA and LUCK scores will be constantly changing during your adventure. You should keep an accurate record of these scores. However, you should never erase your *Initial* scores. As the adventure progresses, you may be awarded additional SKILL, STAMINA or LUCK points, but these may never exceed your *Initial* scores.

Fighting Battles

You will often find yourself reading paragraphs which instruct you to fight a creature of some sort. You should resolve the battle in the following way.

First record your opponent's SKILL and STAMINA scores on a spare sheet of paper. The scores for each creature are given at the time of the actual encounter. The sequence of combat is then:

1. Roll two dice for the creature. Add its SKILL score. The total is the creature's Attack Strength.
2. Roll two dice for yourself and add your current SKILL score. This total is your Attack Strength.
3. If your Attack Strength is greater than that of your opponent, you have wounded it; go straight to Step 4. If the creature's Attack Strength is greater than yours, it has wounded you; go straight to Step 5. If both scores are the same, you have managed to avoid each other's blows – start the next Attack Round by going to Step 1.
4. You have wounded your opponent. Subtract 2 points from its STAMINA score. If you wish, you may use your LUCK here to do additional damage as described below. Go to Step 6.
5. Your opponent has wounded you. Subtract 2 points from your own STAMINA score. You may use LUCK at this point to minimize the damage.
6. Make the appropriate adjustments to either your opponent's or your own STAMINA score (and to your LUCK too, if you used it).
7. Begin the next Attack Round by going to Step 1.
8. This sequence continues until the STAMINA score of either you or your opponent has been reduced to zero, which means death.

Fighting More Than One Opponent

In certain situations you may face more than one opponent. Sometimes you will treat all opponents as a single monster; at other times you may have to fight each one in turn; and at other times you may have to fight them all at the same time! If they are treated as a single opponent the combat is resolved normally. When you are instructed to fight your opponents one at a time, the combat is again resolved normally – except that once you defeat an enemy, the next one steps forward to fight you!

When you find yourself under attack from more than one opponent at the same time, each adversary will make a separate attack on you during each Attack Round. You must decide which one you are attacking. Attack your chosen target as in a normal battle. Against any additional opponents you roll the dice for your Attack Strength in the usual way; if your Attack Strength is equal to or greater than your opponent's you will not inflict any damage; you have simply managed to avoid that enemy's attack. If your Attack Strength is lower than your opponent's, however, you will be wounded in the normal way.

Luck and Its Uses

At various times during your adventure, either in battles or when you find yourself in a situation in which you could be Lucky or

Things are not going well for the slayer of Balthus Dire. Not only have you lost your left hand, but the widow of your former enemy has joined forces with the High Priestess of Vatos to unleash the power of the Juggernaut, an unstoppable automaton that will bring chaos and destruction to all of Allansia. Luckily, you are not alone on your mission to stop them. Not so luckily, your companion is a being every bit as evil as those you seek to stop: a Ganjee!

Unlucky (you will be told when these apply), you may call on your LUCK for help to make the outcome more favourable. But beware! Using LUCK is a risky business and, if you are Unlucky, the results could be disastrous.

Testing Your Luck

Roll two dice. If the total is less than or equal to your current LUCK score, you have been Lucky and the result will go in your favour. If the number rolled is higher than your current LUCK score, you have been Unlucky, and you will be penalized.

Each time you *Test your Luck* you must deduct 1 point from your current LUCK score. Thus you will soon come to realize that, the more you rely on your LUCK, the more risky the procedure will become.

Using Luck in Battles

In combat you always have the option of using your LUCK either to inflict a more serious wound upon an opponent you have just hit, or to minimize the effects of a wound the creature has inflicted on you.

If you have just wounded the creature, you may *Test your Luck* as described above. If you are Lucky, you will have inflicted a severe wound and may deduct an extra 2 points from the creature's STAMINA score. However, if you are Unlucky, the wound was a mere graze and you do only 1 point of damage to the creature instead of the usual 2 points.

If the creature has just wounded you, you may *Test your Luck* to try to minimize the wound. If you are Lucky, you have managed to avoid taking the full brunt of the blow. Instead of having to deduct 2 points of damage from your STAMINA, you may deduct only 1 point. If you are Unlucky, though, you have been hit by a more serious blow. Subtract 1 extra point from your STAMINA.

Remember: you must subtract 1 point from your own LUCK score every time you *Test your Luck*, no matter what the outcome.

Magic

As a powerful warrior-wizard, you have access to many fantastic spells that have seen you through many an ordeal. You will be informed when there is an opportunity to avail yourself of such spells.

Stamina and Provisions

In the course of your adventure, you may obtain some provisions. These can be consumed any time you are not in combat. Each portion of provisions consumed will restore 4 lost STAMINA points.

HAND OF FATE ADVENTURE SHEET

SKILL
INITIAL SKILL =

STAMINA
INITIAL STAMINA =

LUCK
INITIAL LUCK =

GOLD

POSSESSIONS

PROVISIONS

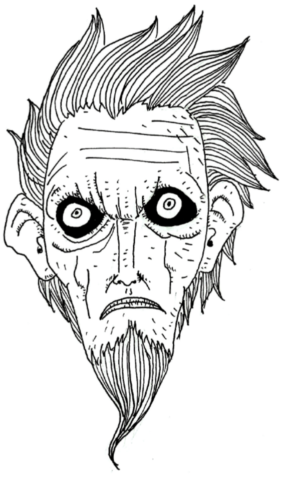
NOTES

BACKGROUND

Northern Allansia is well-known for its bitter winters, but its springs can be surprisingly pleasant. Or so you are finding this sunny morning as you stride over the rolling green hills taking in the crisp morning air. You are headed for the city of Zengis, hoping that there you will find adventure and purpose.

The countryside of these parts is well-known for its dangers and few would countenance travelling to the city by anything other than the cobbled main road. You are one of those few. As an accomplished wizard and warrior and slayer of the inhuman demi-sorcerer Balthus Dire, you have little to fear from the Orcs and Goblins known to prowl hereabouts.

Whistling a merry tune, you head towards a low-lying valley in the distance, its slopes heavily wooded with conifers. Travelling via this picturesque valley should knock several hours off your journey.



A melodious twittering of birdsong greets you as you enter the valley, and the crunch of loose pebbles accompanies you as you follow the winding track between the two slopes. Although you have every confidence in your abilities, you allow your hand to rest on the pommel of the sword belted around your waist and keep your eyes on the trees to either side; it never hurts to expect ambush at every turn.

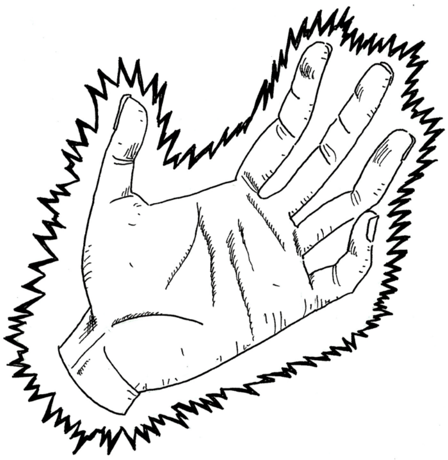
What you were not expecting however is what you come across further along the trail. Lying against a tussock of grass and groaning as he holds his side is a man covered in bruises and scrapes, dried blood upon his long moustache. A brown eye looks imploringly in your direction as you approach.

'Please... good sir,' he wheezes. 'I was making my way to Zengis when I was ambushed by Rhino-men. I need to be taken to a healer right away.'

Before you can reply, his eyes go wide, staring in terror at something behind you. You spin round to see three Rhino-men creeping out of the trees, lowered halberds in their thick-hided hands. 'They're back!' cries the wounded man in horror.

With a smile, you draw your sword. 'Oh, don't worry about them,' you say.

Turn to paragraph **1**.



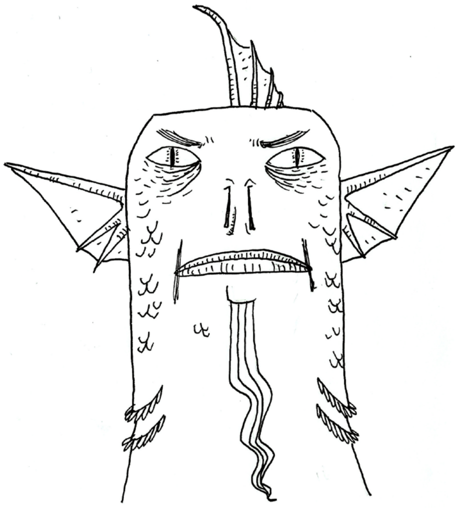
1

The three rhino-men advance hesitantly, clearly unsure of your abilities. You twirl your sword in the air and let out a spirited laugh. This could prove fun. Despite their beastly appearance, rhino-men are not particularly strong fighters and they scare easily. Your left hand tingles with the flow of magical energy. A well-chosen spell should be more than a match for these bullies. Which spell will you cast?

Weakness?	Turn to **46**.
Fool's Gold?	Turn to **120**.
Creature Copy?	Turn to **85**.

2

The beast bursts forth round the corner. Slanted eyes fix upon you and too late do you remember that you should have covered your own. Your skin hardens, the moisture in your body solidifies, organs and bones merge into a single substance. And before the basilisk stands a statue with a fuming Ganjee strapped to its belt.



3

The potion is refreshingly cool and you soon feel better from having drunk it. You have just consumed a potion the mimsies brew to cure Dorsal Rot. This disease is unknown in humans, but luckily the potion is ninety-five percent water, so you find it eminently refreshing. In somewhat better spirits, you continue on to Vatos. Turn to **231**.

4

'Ooh, a hard bargainer, eh?' chuckles the king. He reaches into the folds of his robe and produces a blue crystal, an aura of absolute cold surrounding it. 'Let us have the impish one and not only will I arrange for you to return to the surface, but I shall throw in this magical Ice Crystal. Simply throw it at your enemies and they will instantly freeze solid.'

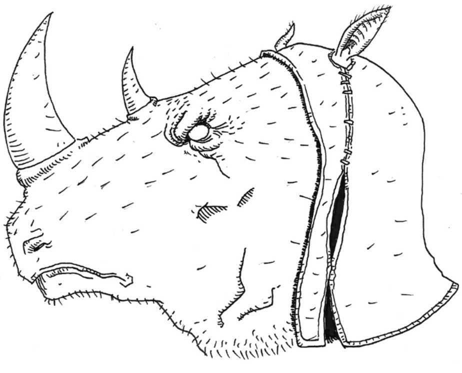
A tempting offer. Will you accept (turn to **66**), or refuse (turn to **226**)?

5

Leesha tuts. 'Such a pity. I reared him from an egg. I guess I'll just have to get my beautiful hands dirty.'

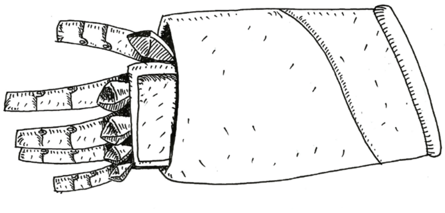
She rises to her slender feet, taking a black sickle from beneath her pillow. 'At least this way I know I'll definitely get the key once you're dead. I'm giving you a fair fight after all. If you consider battling one who cannot be harmed fair. Which I do.'

If you possess a sword made of bone, turn to **229**. If not, turn to **24**.



6

The potion tastes warm, and in response your whole body feels warm. Your lungs in particular feel hot, but not unpleasantly so. Hoping that the liquid you have just drunk will give you some ability to breathe underwater, you hurry from the laboratory. On your way out, you can grab another potion if you wish. You can choose between a blue potion and a red one. No-one notices you as you swim once more past the busy scientists tending to their odd mixtures. Leaving the laboratory, you swim out towards the bubble's shell. Bursting through, you once again feel the full weight of the river's waters above you. Just as you had hoped, you find you can breathe fine. Not knowing how long this effect will last, you hurry up to the surface, bursting into fresh air some minutes later. Glad to have escaped the aquatic city of the mimsies, you clamber up the northern bank and head once more in the direction of the Moonstone Hills. Turn to **136**.



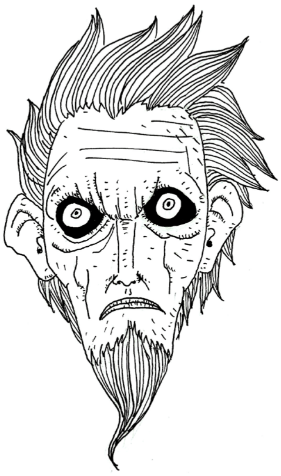
7

You step through the archway into a large room, its black walls festooned with carvings of demonic beings and lost souls. A chalk pentagram is drawn on the cracked stone floor and an idol of a man with a grinning skull for a face rests against one wall.

'What is this place?' you ask.

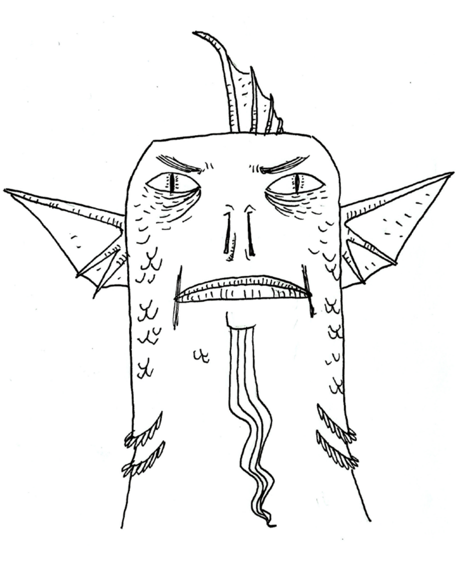
'I believe it is the place Leesha communes with the dead,' says Sussurus. 'Might be worth a try you know. The dead are never short of wisdom to impart.'

If you are prepared to try to summon a spirit in the pentangle, turn to **25**. Otherwise, you return to the previous room and take the other archway. Turn to **130**.



8

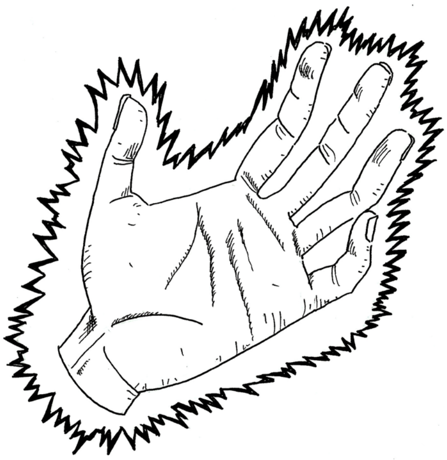
You race back to the stairs. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to **193**. If you are Unlucky, turn to **156**.



9

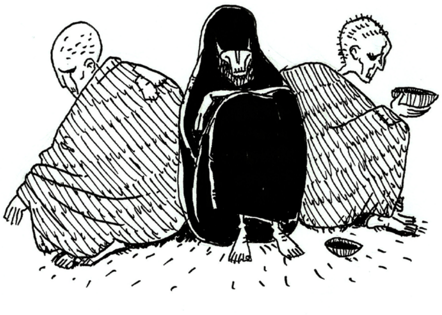
As soon as you let go of the rod, you immediately feel short of breath, the weight of the river water seeming to press you downward. Kicking your legs frantically, your one good arm of little assistance, you swim to the surface. You break through gasping for air. Upon the bank stands the bearded fisherman, hand on his hips and booted foot tapping in annoyance.

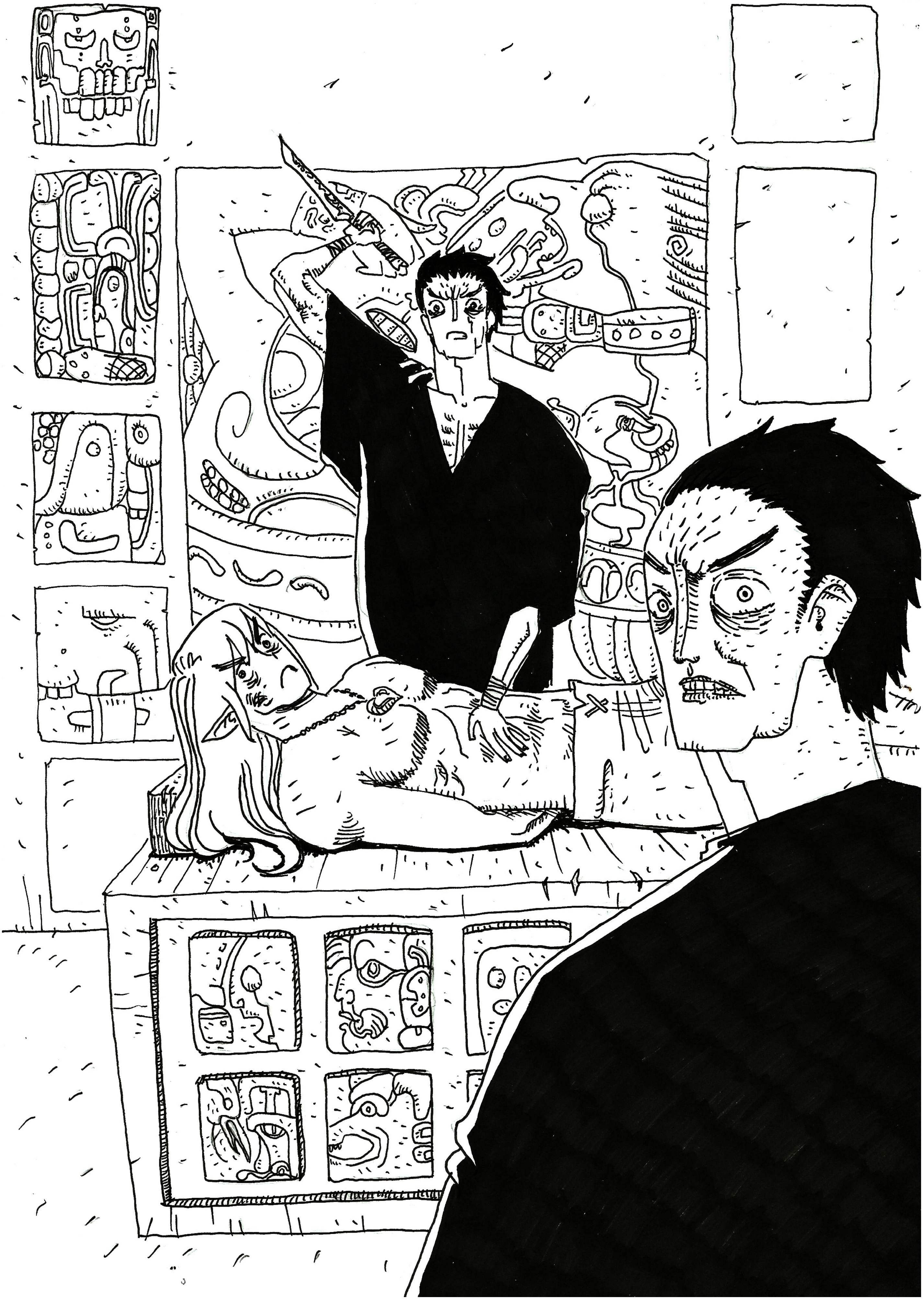
'Couldn't at least have saved my good rod, could you?' he mutters before ambling away without even stopping to help you reach the bank. Peeved at his ingratitude, you swim to the bank and haul yourself upon its grassy slope. Once you have recovered your breath you set off once more for the hills, water dripping from your hair and clothing. Turn to **136**.



10

You wrap the cloak around your face, covering your eyes and mouth, hoping you can keep moving in the same direction. The storm rages, your body constantly buffeted by lumps of sand, but the cloak protects you from the worst of it. At last the storm subsides and you lower the cloak, hoping to reach Vatos before you have to endure any more such storms. Turn to **54**.





11

The door opens to reveal a most alarming sight. A bare-chested figure is bound and hunched, head pressed against a sacrificial block. Standing over him are two dark-haired men wearing tight-fitting robes. One of these men holds a dagger high, ready to bring it down upon the victim. Distracted by your entry, he looks at you in confusion, dagger still held aloft. The victim raises his head. By his angular cheekbones and slanted eyes there is no confusing him with anything other than an elf. If you possess an Axe of Hacking, turn to **152**. If not, turn to **168**.

12

The boy, bleeding from a score of wounds, drops to his knees, bending his head forward to expose his neck. It is clear he expects a killing blow. The gathered nomads watch you intently, barely daring to breathe. Will you finish the boy off (turn to **103**)? Or will mercy force you to spare him (turn to **181**)?

13

The tunnel twists and turns, an odd smell wafting from somewhere. 'What is that?' you say with a grimace.

'How would I know?' says Sussurus. 'Probably basilisk faeces. Good for your skin, I've heard.'

You emerge into a large cavern. The smell is much stronger here. Three more tunnels lead away into the darkness. One of them is high in the stalactite-covered ceiling and is quite impossible to reach. Of the other two, one is covered with the same slime you saw before, though this slime looks fresher. The other tunnel is quite dry. Will you take the slimy route (turn to **100**), or the dryer one (turn to **53**)?

14

You scramble over the top, dropping into a small alleyway that joins a busy thoroughfare a couple of yards ahead. A busy inn with a seemingly boisterous clientele sits at the street's corner, a group of city watchmen standing outside it, no doubt ensuring the bar's brawls do not get too out of hand. Across the street from this is an open manhole, leading into the city's sewers. Behind you can hear the beggars clambering the wall. Will you race over to the city watchmen and ask for help (turn to **42**), or will you head down the manhole and seek sanctuary in Zengis' sewer network by turning to **212**?

15

Zengis' market square is a teeming mass of colourful entertainers, loud-voiced merchants, haggling peasants and stern-faced watchmen. You pay little heed to the many sellers of cheap meats and tacky souvenirs and instead head to those merchants who supply wares more suited to the aspiring adventurer. One bearded fellow has the following to sell for the prices listed:

Sword	4 Gold Pieces
Provisions	1 Gold Piece each
Cloak	2 Gold Pieces
Large Water Flask	2 Gold Pieces
Potion of Fortune	3 Gold Pieces

Buy whatever you wish. If you do not possess a weapon, the sword will allow you to fight without an Attack Strength penalty. The cloak can be pulled around your face to protect you from the wind and rain. The large water flask allows you to hold about twice as much water as your current flask. The Potion of Fortune adds 1 to your *Initial* LUCK score and sets your current LUCK score to that amount. Once you have finished making any purchases, you decide the time has come to leave Zengis and begin your pursuit of Lucretia and Leesha. Turn to **187**.

16

With the disciples dead, you quickly untie the elf and help him to his feet. 'My thanks, friend,' he says. 'I was riding my giant eagle over the desert when we were attacked by a vicious sand wyvern. We prevailed, but my bird was greatly wounded in the battle and I was forced to land. Despite my nursing, my eagle could not survive and died soon after. I set off into the desert, the sun murder on my fair skin. At last, I collapsed to the sands and when I came to, I was here.'

He quickly goes through the robes of one of the dead disciples and produces a crystal vial which he hands to you. 'My potion of levitation, stolen from me by these cretins. Not much payment for my life, I realise, but it could prove useful to you. But tell me, what brings you to this accursed city?'

Certain you can trust the elf, you tell him of your mission to stop the launching of the Juggernaut. The elf nods. 'I haven't seen much of the city, but I know the inner sanctum is back the way you came. I imagine it is here you will find the Juggernaut. I'd like to help but I cannot stand to be in this place for even a moment longer.'

'Ah, the excuses of cowards never cease to amaze me.' remarks Sussurus.

'Shut up,' you snap. You tell the elf you understand and that if he heads back out to the corridor with you and heads left he can get back to the surface quickly. The elf thanks you. Before you go, you can take one of the dark disciples' black talismans if you like. There is also a trapdoor in the room, but the elf says there is nothing down there but a bunch of iron eaters. You both head back out into the corridor, waving goodbye as he heads left while you go right. Turn to **91**.

17

You come to a door made of dazzling gold in the wall to your right. The smell of incense drifts from under the door, so pungent it makes your nose wrinkle. Ahead, the passageway narrows and the ceiling gets lower - you would have to stoop over to get much further. There is a circular hole in the wall not far past the door. You have no idea what its purpose might be. Will you open the golden door (turn to **62**), or will you instead carry on along the passage by turning to **118**?

18

A thought strikes you. 'Sussurus,' you begin, 'being a spirit, you have some knowledge of the future, yes?'

'Glimpses, visions. Nothing clear or certain. Why?'

'I've got a plan.'

Seeing a disused wooden table outside The Fog and Mist tavern, you take a seat at it and proudly place Sussurus' bottle on the table for all to see. 'Hear ye! Hear ye!' you cry. 'Come have your fortune's told by a spirit who can see through the mists of time. For just one gold piece you can find out what great destinies await you. Want to know if you'll find love? Glory? Renown? Riches? Then step right up, and hear the wisdom of the arcane!'

'I think Lucretia cutting your hand off has been quite beneficial,' remarks the Ganjee. 'Clearly you were in the wrong line of work with all that adventuring malarkey.'

Sure enough, your first customer is not long in coming. A grossly overweight woman with fair hair kept in pigtails takes a seat opposite you and places a gold piece on the table.

'Thank you, madam,' you say. 'Oh great Sussurus! Impart your knowledge of her destiny to this good woman.'

Playing along Sussurus begins to hum for a good half minute before starting to speak. 'I see a grisly death in six months' time, brought about by massive heart failure caused by decades of rich food.'

The woman looks ashen-faced. 'Is there no way to avoid this fate? Maybe I could cut down on what I eat?'

'No, the damage is already done. Next!'

The woman tremblingly leaves.

'Did you really see that?' you whisper to Sussurus.

'No, I didn't see anything. Common folk like that are far too unimportant to make any mark on destiny. But I decided if you were going to put me through this indignity I may as well have some fun with it.'

Sure enough, customer after customer comes and the Ganjee predicts all sorts of horrible deaths from being eaten alive by rats to drowning in a vat of wine. In but an hour's time, your purse is heavy with fourteen Gold Pieces, but your conscience is equally heavy with guilt. You are just considering packing up for the day when two city watchmen clad in chainmail and spiked helmets saunter up to you. 'We hear you've been causing a lot of distress with that spirit of yours,' declares one of them. 'What have you got to say for yourself?'

'It's just business,' you mutter feebly.

'Yeah, well, the people of Zengis don't want your kind of business polluting our fair city. You're under arrest!'

Will you attempt to reason with the watchmen (turn to **149**), or will you leap up and attack them (turn to **81)?**

19

The servant leaps to his feet. 'You shouldn't be here. This place is forbidden to idolizers!'

With that, he seizes a quarterstaff from the floor and charges on you.

EUNUCH
GUARD SKILL 8 STAMINA 8

If you win, turn to **188**.

20

The ground gets increasingly squishy underfoot. The only light comes from the manhole opening behind you, and soon that is far behind. When the darkness gets near pitch, Sussurus makes a humming noise and begins to glow, revealing the stone sewer corridors in all their dubious glory. 'It seems there's some magic I can still perform from within this accursed bottle,' he says. 'You're welcome, by the way.'

Before you can retort, a glooping noise sounds from the shadows. Slithering into the light comes a creature made of some strange gelatine-like substance. It has no legs but instead wobbles towards you like a great jelly, pudgy arms reaching for you, slime dripping from its cavernous maw. You must fight!

JELLY SKILL 5 STAMINA 8

If you win, you take a tunnel in the opposite direction from where the jelly came. Reassuringly, the ground begins to get a little firmer as you continue on. Turn to **167**.

21

To say you are wracked with thirst would be an understatement. You are driven almost delirious from the intense heat and dehydration, your body barely able to sweat any more, your breath coming in great pants as you force one foot in front of another. Lose 3 STAMINA points. If you survive, turn to **231**.

22

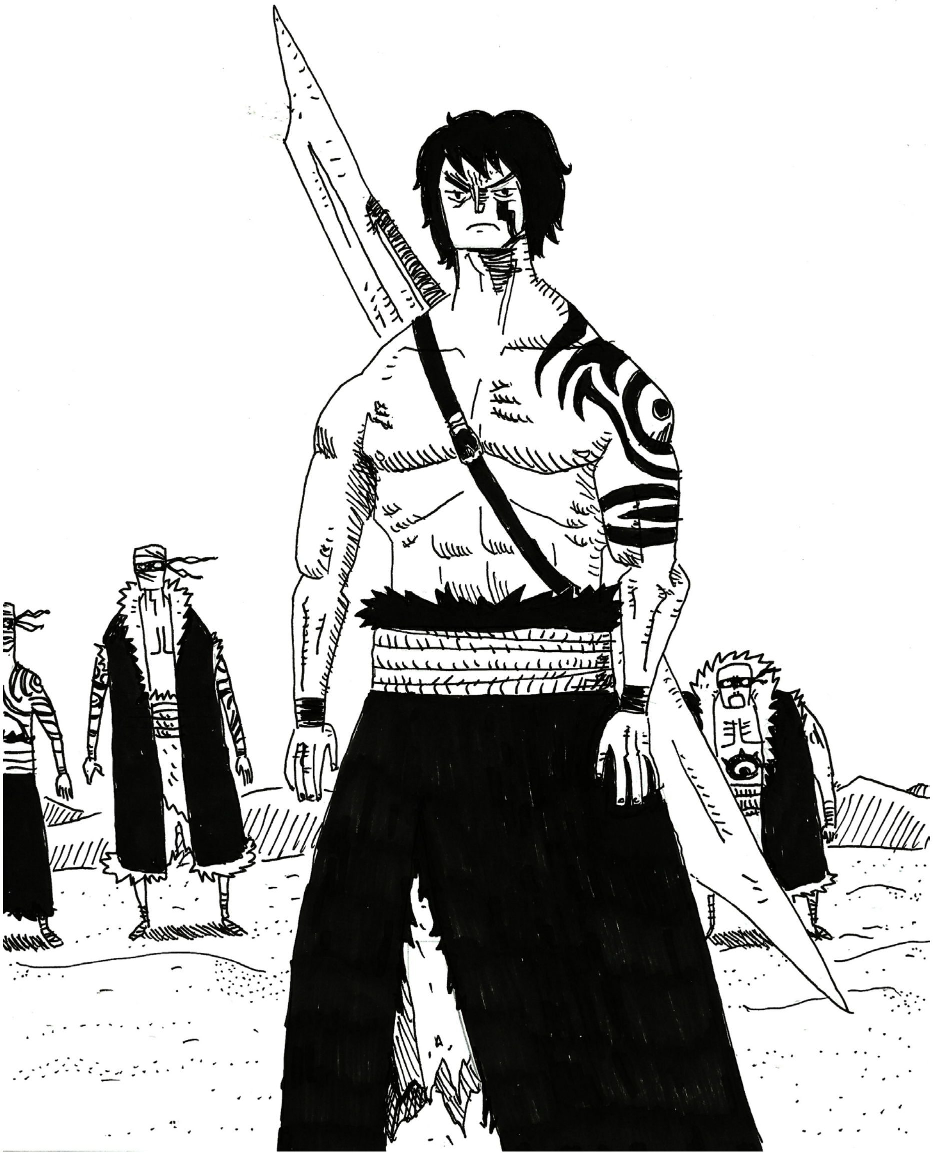
You wait until the coast is clear and then dive through the circular opening of the building. All about, mimsies stand mixing the contents of test-tubes, boiling odd-smelling liquids and grinding different treasures of the sea into paste. They are oblivious to you as you pass by, heading to the back of the building. You come to an oval room, its stone walls lined with shelves of coral, stacked with different coloured potion in stoppered flasks. An old mimsy, his fish-like skin a pale pink, lies in the corner, his scaled eyelids closed behind a thick set of goggles. Bubbles pour from his mouth as he sleeps. You swim over to the potions, hoping not to wake him up. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to **111**. If you are Unlucky, turn to **56**.

23

Fang-Zen hurries down the stairs to recapture you. But in his haste, he forgets about the fire trap! He takes but two steps before a roaring inferno rises from one of the steps. Fang-Zen screams as the flames ravage his clothes and skin. He tumbles forward, landing next to you with a clatter, rolling on the ground in desperation to put out the flames. Eager to be away from the burning Khulian before he sets you on fire too, you race back up the stairs, careful to step only on every second step. The screams of Fang-Zen still ringing, you hurry through the kitchen into a hallway and throw open the heavy front door of the house. Sunlight greets you, and with a smile you hurry into it. Turn to **119**.

24

You strike the priestess full in the face, unconcerned by her relative frailty in comparison to yours. She staggers back from the force of the



blow, but there is no mark on her - even her heavy make-up has not been disturbed. Laughing, she swings the sickle at your neck, slicing through your jugular. You fall to your knees, blood spurting all over the fabulous bedchamber.

‘What a mess you’re making,’ sighs Leesha. ‘Some people just have no respect for others’ belongings.’

You hear no more as you fall forward, dead before you even hit the sumptuous carpet.

25

‘Ooh, nothing like some occult dabblings to give the day a kick,’ says Sussurus. ‘I didn’t know you had it in you.’

Following the Ganjee’s unusually helpful directions, you stand at the edge of the pentangle, muttering arcane words whilst concentrating on your mission. Hopefully some spirit will heed your call. No sooner has this crossed your mind than the pentangle’s lines erupt into blue fire, a dense mist rising forth, forming slowly into a humanoid spirit. It seems the dead will indeed speak to you.

Roll a die. If you roll:

1 or 2	Turn to **195**.
3 or 4	Turn to **175**.
5 or 6	Turn to **86**.

26

In this undignified position you are brought to a cluster of brightly coloured tents. Robed men and women watch you with interest as you are brought to the centre of the tents and roughly thrown to the sand. The nomads gather around you in a circle while one of their number cuts through your bonds with a sword. He then passes the sword to you and quickly retreats. Confused, you watch as the nomad leader claps his ringed hands. A tall, broad-shouldered youth barges through the circle. Unlike the others he is bare-chested, thick curls of black hair framing a handsome face. A strange sword, its blade made of some bizarre bone-like substance, is strapped to his back. Deep brown eyes watch you as he unslings this odd weapon. The chief claps his hand once more. ‘Stranger! For trespassing in the home of the Sanderi, you must battle my son. Should you prove victorious you will be allowed to leave in peace.’

The boy smiles, confident that such an eventuality will not come to pass. If you possess a Sun Talisman, turn to **139**. Otherwise, you must fight!

NOMAD
CHAMPION SKILL 9 STAMINA 14

If you reduce him to 2 STAMINA points or less, turn to **12**.

27

You untie Sussurus’ bottle from your belt and pass it over to Tynar. ‘What are you doing, fool? You cannot hope to win without my wisdom!’ the Ganjee protests.

‘That’s enough out of you,’ snaps Tynar with a wagging finger before turning to you. ‘I’ll be sure to find a way to return our friend to the nether planes, don’t you worry.’

‘The nether planes will not hold one such as me for eternity,’ rumbles Sussurus. ‘You can be sure I will be returning to pay you a visit, priest!’

‘Whatever. Good luck on your quest, my friend. Remember, the fate of Allansia rests on your shoulders.’

You thank Tynar for his help and bid him farewell. Sussurus avoids your gaze, still obviously having a huff. You set off to the marketplace, eager to equip yourself for your adventure. Turn to **39**.

28

The imps lying in a scattered bloodied heap, you stride once more towards Lucretia. While you were busy fighting, she cast a Stamina spell on herself and is fighting fit once more.

LUCRETIA DIRE	SKILL 8	STAMINA 6

If you win, turn to **173**.

29

The magistrate, having heard the weighty evidence against you, turns toward you and clears his throat with a dry cough. 'Despite the good deeds you have done in the past,' he intones, 'no-one is above the law. It is of the opinion of this court that life on the road has turned you into a dangerous criminal and for the safety of the city, you are to be quartered in Blackwater Prison for no less than eight years.'

He bangs his gavel, then motions for the guards to take you away. Tynar protests at the top of his voice, but he cannot lift a finger to save you. A prison cell awaits you, while death and destruction awaits Allansia. You have failed in your mission.

30

All four eyes light up as you dangle the shell bracelet before them. 'Let me pass and it's yours,' you say.

'You know, we could just kill him and take it.' whispers the right head, probably less subtly than he thinks.

'Now, now. What would Mum say?'

'Her right head or her left head?'

'Oh, don't start that again. You can pass in return for the bracelet, human.'

You happily make the deal and the Calcorm stands aside to let you pass through the archway. Turn to **141**.

31

You rise from your hiding place, arms held high in surrender. As you do so, you catch a glimpse of one of the elven archers, skulking behind the church wall. If you possess an Axe of Hacking, turn to **93**. If not, turn to **55**.

32

The door leads into a small square room, the wall decorated with various arcane symbols and unwholesome images. Two braziers stand by the far wall, burning brightly. Just as you are pondering who would have left them lit, thick black tendrils of smoke rise from the flames, merging to take on the shape of a creature made of smoke itself but endowed with vicious claw like hands. The smoke demon gives a toothless grin and drifts over towards you. If you possess a horn, turn to **219**. If not, but you possess an Axe of Hacking, turn to **144**. If you have neither however, turn to **159**.

33

A sharp pain erupts through your back! You gaze down, dumbfounded to see the bloody end of a blade protruding through your chest.

'Thank you for taking care of Lucretia for me,' whispers a husky voice into your ear. 'You have given Allansia the mistress it deserves.' Leesha pulls her sword from your back and you fall forward, on top of Lucretia's body, the two of you finding death together.

34

Your grip on the wall slips just as you are preparing to swing your leg over and you tumble backwards, landing flat on your back on the cobbles (lose 2 STAMINA points). Before you can pull yourself up, the beggars are upon you! You must fight all three at the same time.

FIRST BEGGAR	SKILL 4	STAMINA 4
SECOND BEGGAR	SKILL 4	STAMINA 4
THIRD BEGGAR	SKILL 4	STAMINA 6

After five attack rounds, note down how many beggars you have killed (if any) before turning to **208**.

35

The heat is unbearable and your legs ache from trudging through the unstable sand, sliding back with every step. Your throat is as dry as sandpaper and your exposed skin sizzles. Subtract 2 STAMINA points. You must reach the shelter of Vatos soon, or else you will die out here! If Sussurus is with you, turn to **227**. Otherwise, turn to **72**.

36

'What on earth are you doing?' snaps the Ganjee. 'Do that and you'll plunge to your doom, you imbecile.'

Will you stab the bird anyway (turn to **145**), or will you take Sussurus' advice and wait to see where the roc takes you (turn to **60**)?

37

Finding a fairly busy lane that runs between the merchant's guild and The Fog and Mist tavern, you take a seat in a disused doorway, extending a hand to passers-by and asking for coin. You have little success for the first couple of hours, but as the day wears on, you take to flaunting your stump where your hand used to be and, whether motivated by pity or amusement, you soon find people become much more generous.

'Humans continue to amaze me,' mutters Sussurus. 'Only a species completely devoid of logic would see fit to reward the kind of failure that would result in one's hand being cut off.'

Ignoring him, you continue with this tactic and after four hours you have been given an impressive total of 12 Gold Pieces. Deciding this sum is probably enough to afford some equipment for the task ahead of you, you rise to your feet and dust yourself off. As you are doing so, three misshapen figures wrapped in black rags waddle down the lane towards you. 'Here, what's yer game?' snarls one, a man with only a warted chin poking out from his hood.

'Yeah,' growls another. 'Cos of you and yer missin' 'and, we ain't made no money today. Everyone's already given it all away to you!'

'Who are you anyway? We ain't seen you around 'ere before?'

Uh-oh. This could turn ugly. Will you:

Attack the beggars before they attack you?	Turn to **125**.
Try to placate them?	Turn to **48**.
Run for it?	Turn to **199**.

38

As the goblins notice your approach, the three of them place their backs to what they were looking over, blocking it off entirely from your vision. 'What yoo want, yooman?' mutters their leader, a short sword clutched tightly in his right hand. Will you demand to know what they are covering (turn to **142**)? Or will you attack the goblins by turning to **78**?

39

As expected, the road to the market square is packed with people eager to sample the colourful wares of the sundry merchants who ply their trade in Zengis. The entrance to the market square is a stone archway, marked with a relief of a rearing lion. Two city watchmen stand either side of the arch, watching all entrants to the market square from under iron helmets. If you have killed two watchmen, turn to **76**. Otherwise, you pass into the square without any bother from the guards. Turn to **15**.

40

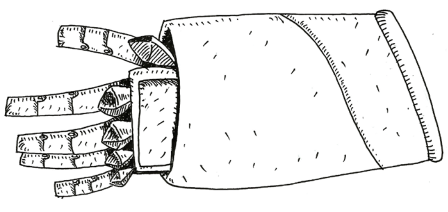
You decide to seek out Pen Ty Kora, a wizard commonly known as the Healer. He lives not far from here and is known as one of the wisest men of these parts. Like you, he studied under the Grand Wizard of Yore, though he is several decades your senior. If any man knows how you can reach Vatos quickly, he will. Your plan decided upon, you set off westwards towards the home of the Healer. Turn to **114**.

41

Paying no heed to the insufferable Ganjee's protestations, you throw open the door, slamming it shut behind you. You face a set of stone steps leading up out of the basement. Sensing freedom is nearly within your grasp, you place a foot upon the first step - and shriek in pain as a roaring flame bursts from the steps, searing your flesh and burning into your clothing. You fall backwards, rolling on the floor in an attempt to smother the flames. At last you succeed in putting out the fire. Battered, exhausted and badly burnt, you slip into unconsciousness.

You awaken to find yourself chained to the wall once again, the grinning face of Fang-Zen, the Khulian sell-sword, looking up at you. 'Well, well,' he smirks. 'I don't know how you managed to slip from your bonds last time and kill poor old Brus, but you won't be doing it a second time. Not while I've got my eye on you.'

Unfortunately Fang-Zen is completely right in this assessment. Sussurus will not aid you again and all of Allansia is doomed to face the Juggernaut's wrath. Your head hangs forward in shame.



42

'You have to help me!' you gasp as you race up to an overweight and unshaven sergeant. 'Beggars are trying to rob me!'

The sergeant looks you up and down, scratching at his sagging belly. 'You don't look much better than a beggar yourself. How'd you lose that hand?'

Before you can respond, you are joined by the three beggars. 'This man robbed us!' they cry almost in unison.

The four of you shout over one another, trying to appeal to the bemused watchmen. At last, the sergeant shakes his head in annoyance.

'I've heard enough,' he bellows. 'You are all under arrest for disturbing watchmen on their duty. Take them away boys!'

You are seized by several mailed fists and dragged away. Well, at least those bullying beggars are getting a similar punishment. Take what consolation you can in this before turning to **170**.

43

You drop to the ground, arms held out wide as you plead for mercy. You are seized by the shoulders and frogmarched to the jail house, your captor muttering all the while. Turn to **170**.

44

You seize hold of the mercenary's arms then throw yourself to the floor, planting a boot on his chest and flinging him backwards. He lands with a crash in a jumble of saucepans, the impact knocking him down the basement stairs. There is a scream of agony as the fire trap on the stairs consumes him on his way down. Deciding not to bother checking if the flames have killed him, you hurriedly get to your feet and run from the kitchen into a barely furnished hall. You throw open the heavy front door and stride triumphantly into the sunlight. Turn to **119**.

45

You try to heave yourself upwards, but it is too difficult with one hand. You scan about for better footholds on the leg to give you a boost. Just as you spot one, however, the Juggernaut raises its mighty left leg. You tumble backwards, landing heavily on your back, the breath knocked from your body. You can't even scream as the great foot's shadow falls over you. Death is instantaneous as the foot comes down, crushing you into dust.

46

You point with your left hand at the lead rhino-man and bark out an arcane command. With a grunt, the rhino-man drops his heavy halberd, beady eyes staring in confusion as to why he is suddenly too weak to wield it. A quick thrust of your blade brings an end to his confusion as well as his life. With a bellow the second rhino-man swings his halberd at you.

RHINO-MAN SKILL 6 STAMINA 6

If you defeat him, turn to **198**.

47

The Sand Snapper ensnares you with one of its tentacles and yanks backward. You immediately fall on your posterior, given barely a moment to realise what is happening before you are hauled towards the creature's open maw. Those great jaws come down and death is thankfully swift.

48

'Gentlemen,' you say. 'I'm sure you more than most can empathise with someone who has fallen on hard times. I was recently robbed of my hand and cannot work and so I am forced to beg in the streets. Providence was with me today and I am thankful for it, but I would not seek to continuously take from you gentlemen what you so desperately need. So I will leave Zengis this very day, leaving the charity of the streets once more to you.'

The beggars grumble and mutter, but you feel you're winning them over.

'Plus,' chimes in Sussurus from his dangling position, 'if you three have such low ambition that you're trying to keep a monopoly in begging of all things you really don't deserve any money.'

Any good grace you have won is immediately lost. The lead beggar sticks out a calloused palm. 'Hand over all the gold you made today and you can leave Zengis whenever you like. If not you'll wish it was just your hand missing once we're done with you.'

Gods, you wish you could still cast the Fool's Gold spell! If you are prepared to hand over your newly acquired twelve Gold Pieces, turn to **221**. If you refuse however, turn to **125**.

49

'How did you come by that weapon?' the dwarf asks, an edge of seriousness to his voice.

You tell him of how you found the dead dwarf in the sewers. He purses his lips in response. 'The Axes of Hacking are powerful weapons indeed, but they were made for a specific purpose and the enchantment upon them is of a dark nature. I don't think you should be travelling with one, nor should they be in human hands. However, I won't insist you give it up; it is hardly my place to tell you what you should or should not do. If you were to give it to me though, I could give you a potion of anti-venom in return. Hardly of the same value as the axe of course, but it may save your life one day.'

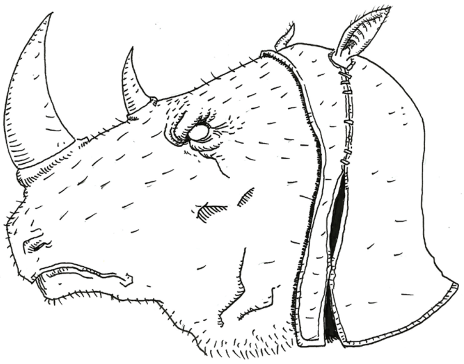
Choose to make the trade if you wish. After that you say goodbye to the helpful dwarf and set off south, deeper into the hills. Turn to **148**.

50

Knowing you are defenceless at this range, you race down towards the Wheelies, the three of them hurling knives at you as quick as their little hands can muster. Roll a die ten times to represent the thrown knives. Every time you roll a 1, a knife has nicked you and you must subtract 1 STAMINA point. If you survive, you reach the Wheelies and they prepare to fight you in close quarters. Fight all three at the same time.

FIRST WHEELIE	SKILL 6	STAMINA 5
SECOND WHEELIE	SKILL 6	STAMINA 6
THIRD WHEELIE	SKILL 6	STAMINA 5

If you slay all three, you hurry on down the ramp. At last, you arrive at a stone floor at the ramp's end. The stone is covered in a disgusting green slime that clings horribly to your boots. Turn to **108**.



51

You step through the archway. There is a blinding flash. When the light fades you are standing in front of an identical dolmen, but in a far from identical place. Scorching heat sears your skin as you look over endless rolling dunes of sand, the sky as blue as you have ever seen it, no clouds to obscure the blazing orb of the sun. You are in the Desert of Skulls.

'Well, didn't I tell you?' says Sussurus.

You nod, wiping the sweat from your brow before drinking deeply of the water from your flask. Knowing you will have to preserve your supply of this precious liquid as long as possible, you resist drinking too much, even though just seconds in this inferno of a desert has left your throat parched. You are just considering which way to go when you spot a line of specks cresting a far dune. As these shapes get nearer, you see that they are several robed figures riding camels. They are moving in your direction. Will you head towards them (turn to **186**), or head in the opposite direction by turning to **234**?

52

The crystal shatters on the great worm's hide. Immediately it stiffens, the sand covering its hide freezing over. After no more than a few seconds, the sandworm is naught but a giant statue of ice, still towering over the dunes. Pleased to have dispatched such a fearsome foe so easily, you head onward. Turn to **35**.

53

The tunnel climbs steadily upwards, a draught of wind coming from some unknown source ahead. The path twists and turns, and the jagged ceiling gets very low in places, forcing you to stoop. You are just considering turning back and taking the other route when you hear a faint scrabbling ahead, quite far off. It seems to be coming in your direction. Certain that it is none other than the basilisk that comes for you, you prepare yourself for its onslaught, taking special care to cover your eyes with your stunted arm. With a screech, the monstrous lizard is upon you. Luckily, Sussurus is able to direct you in this fight, so you are not quite as disadvantaged as you would be otherwise. Subtract 1 from your Attack Strength for this combat only.

BASILISK	SKILL 7	STAMINA 13

If you win, turn to **147**.

54

Even without the storm, the journey is far from pleasant. The heat is close to unbearable, and your throat feels more leathery than a rhino-man's skin. You take a sip from your water flask, the liquid disgustingly warm as it trickles down your throat. If you are using a large water flask, turn to **220**.

If you are using only the smaller one you took from Brus, turn to **233**.

55

The elf fixes an arrow on you, mouth stern on a face with no mercy. If you are wearing an elven amulet, turn to **89**. If not, turn to **216**.

56

You tiptoe into the room, hoping the mimsy professor is not a light sleeper. Unfortunately, he doesn't need to be to catch you; as you glide past a stack of test-tubes, you forget about Sussurus's bottle swinging from your belt. The test-tubes tumble slowly in the water, but that doesn't stop them hitting the floor with a reverberating crash. At once the professor's eyes pop open and he gives a shout of alarm. You rush forward to shut him up and he hurls a phial at you. It shatters, covering you in a corrosive acid that burns hideously (lose 3 STAMINA points and 1 SKILL point)! As you shake the acid from your body, the professor swims off. But you have no opportunity to root through the phials now, for a trident-wielding mimsy soldier floats in to deal with the intruder!

MIMSY SOLDIER	SKILL 6	STAMINA 6

If you win, turn to **230**.

57

Lucretia's eyes roll back in her head and she crumples backwards, dead. Her collapse is followed by a shattering noise from your waist, and you watch as Sussurus floats free, his prison destroyed with the death of its maker. 'At last!' he gloats triumphantly. 'I thought I might have to spend the rest of eternity in that thing. But how shall I utilise my new found freedom? Hmm, perhaps the total subjugation of Allansia is in order!'

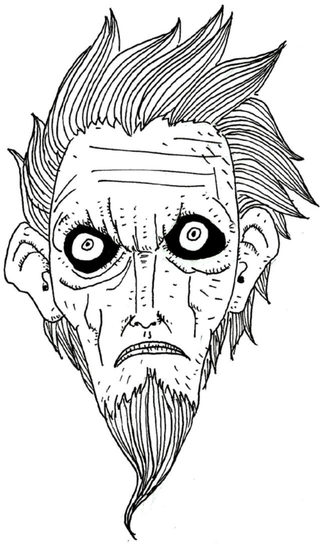
The ghostly head float up to the top of the Juggernaut, hovering over the plinth where your severed hand rests. He begins to glow a vivid orange and your hand begins to do the same. Immediately, the Juggernaut's eyes flare with life and it rises to its full height, raising its massive metal fists. 'Sorry, old friend, but you're too much of a stick-in-the-mud to enjoy my new rule. I'm afraid I'll have to squash you like a bug!'

The Juggernaut brings one great foot forward, the room reverberating with the crash of its footstep. You stagger backwards, appalled that the Ganjee would betray you after all you've been through together. But you cannot flee, not when such an evil creature has control of such an awesome destructive force. The gap in the automaton's left side is its one weak point. If you possess a Potion of Levitation, turn to **184**. Otherwise, turn to **161**.

58

'I say,' begins Sussurus. 'There's a hair-line crack in the wall behind the couch. A secret door, no doubt.'

Striding over to investigate, you see there is indeed a gap of light in the wall. A hefty shove pops it open, leading to a high-ceilinged hall. A bronze idol of a dog with pointed ears dominates the hall, its mouth hanging open in a comical fashion. Incense burns from a brazier at its feet, making you feel uncomfortably light-headed. You decide not to tarry any longer here, opening a door in the far wall. This doorway leads to a cross-passage, the stone walls crudely carved and lacking the decoration of the other parts of the Temple. To the left, the passage ends in a heavy-looking iron door, while to the right it disappears into the darkness, a whiff of incense coming from that direction. Will you head left (turn to **224**) or right (turn to **17**)?



59

No other weapon available to you, you fling the javelin with all your might into the gap in the armour. The point strikes the gears at full force, a bright blue flash filling the chamber as the two meet. The Juggernaut shudders and slowly lifts its left leg. You hold on for dear life as the leg comes down again and the shuddering ceases. The Juggernaut goes still, the light in its eyes dying.

'What in the Hells did you do?' screams Sussurus from above.

'Don't worry! What I've got planned for you is a lot worse!'

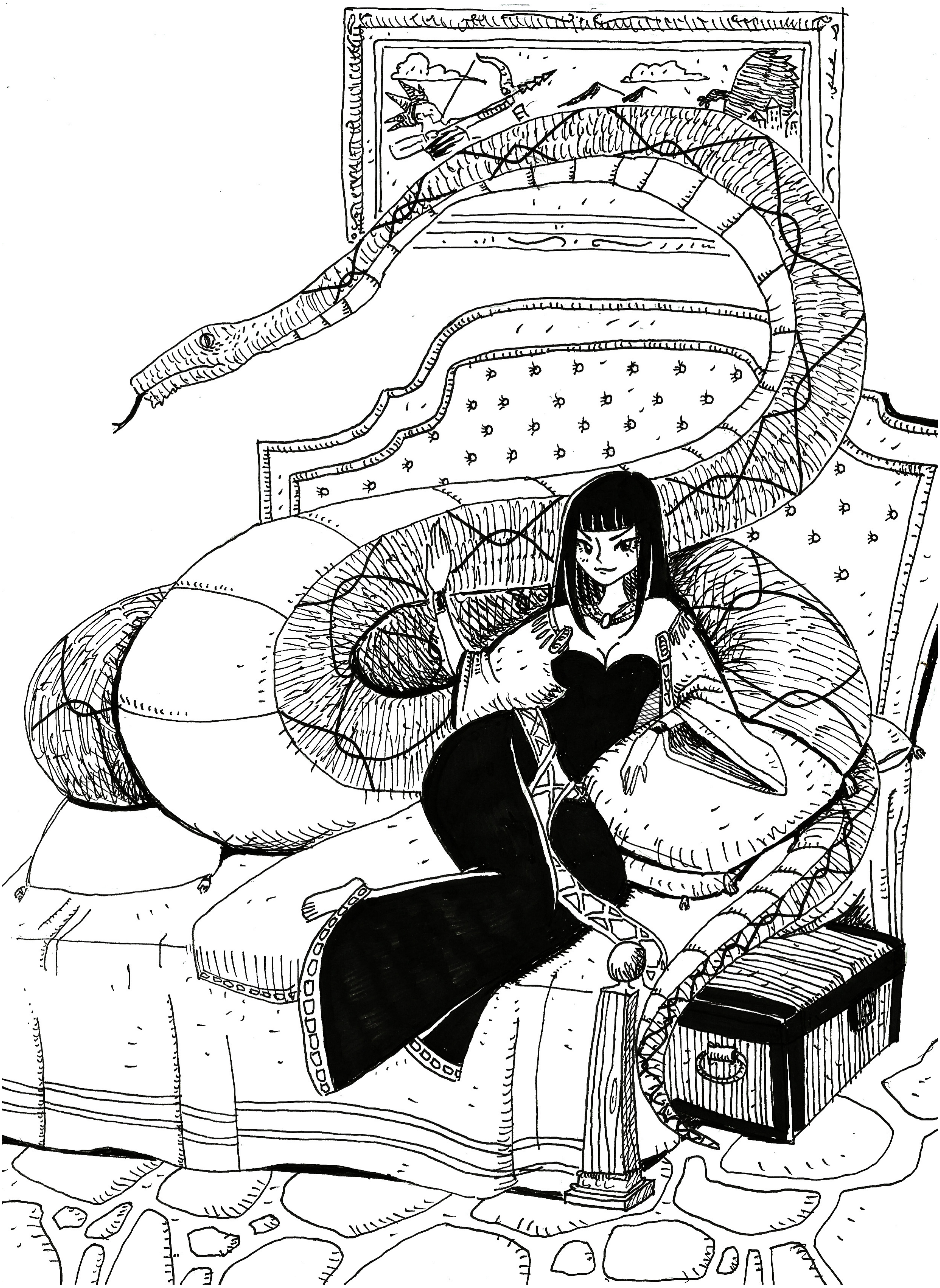
Eager to wreak your vengeance upon the Ganjee, you clamber up the jagged armour of the stationery Juggernaut towards its head. Turn to **92**.

60

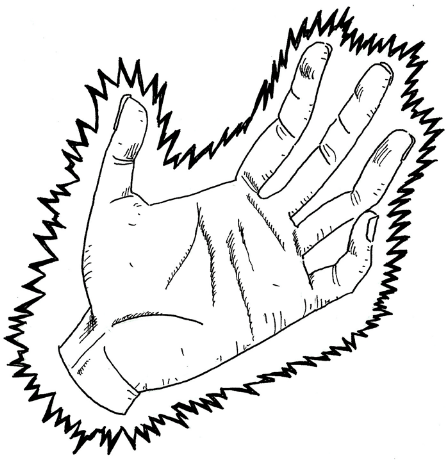
The roc soars higher and higher, heading towards a flat-topped mountain in the depths of the hills. It wheels in the sky then drops, making toward a large thatched nest at the mountain's top. Powder-blue eggs as big as you are lie scattered within the nest. The roc drops you amongst these then screeches loudly before soaring once more into the sky. There is an ominous chirping, and a small beaked face peeks from behind one of the eggs. Black eyes focus on you, and the small bird hops forward, the adorable fluffy plumage of its body offset by its razor sharp beak. Others come from behind other eggs, twisting their necks and chirping as they regard you, backing you against the wall of the nest. The birds chirp excitedly at one another and then they are upon you! Fight them as one enemy.

NESTLINGS	SKILL 6	STAMINA 12

If you win, a hurried search of the nest reveals the bones of several less fortunate than yourself. One of them, flesh and clothes hanging limply off sun-bleached bones, is wearing a talisman shaped like a fiery sun on a chain round his neck. You can take this if you wish. Not wishing to bear the brunt of the roc's vengeance when it discovers what you have done to its progeny, you clamber out of the nest and hurriedly make your way down



the mountain. Luckily it is relatively easygoing and you soon reach the bottom with no sign of the great bird. Although you have slightly lost your bearings, you press onwards through the hills, intent on finding the Healer's home. Turn to **148**.

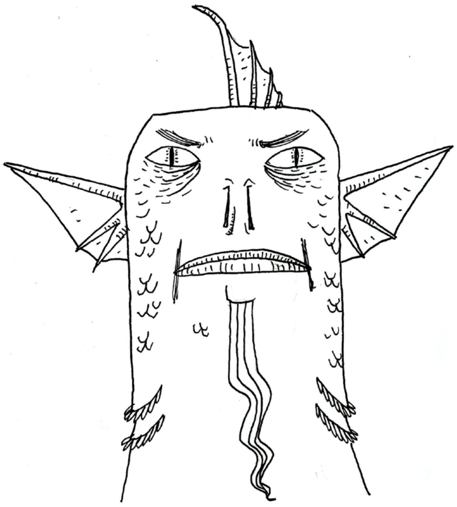


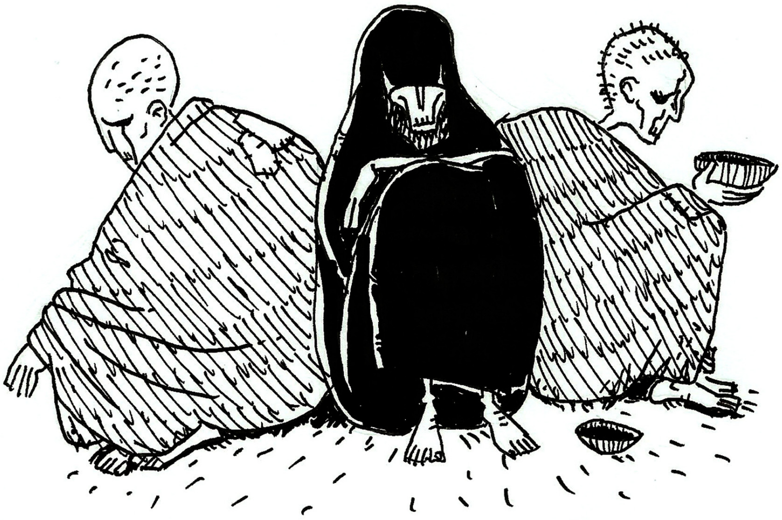
61

Knowing the scheming priestess deserves no mercy, you bring your blade down on her swan-like neck, severing her head from her body. Her golden necklace falls to the floor, glittering in the torchlight.

'Stylishly done,' says Sussurus.

You scoop up the golden necklace, placing it in your pack. The only other thing of interest in the priestess' bedchamber is a silver box sitting at the foot of the bed. Will you open it? If so, turn to **178**. Otherwise, you head back into the corridor. Having little desire to crawl along the low-ceilinged passage to your right, you head left towards the iron door you saw earlier. Turn to **224**.





62

The heady smell of burning incense nearly knocks you out as you push open the door, revealing a sumptuous bed chamber. Rich drapes, great works of art and exotic potted plants are arranged around a magnificent poster bed. Lying upon the bed, regarding you with kohl-rimmed eyes, is a dark haired beauty in a shoulderless black dress, a golden necklace hanging from a slender neck. Delicate hands stroke a huge python that is coiled round the bed, saliva dripping from a fanged mouth. 'Well, here's a surprise,' says the woman in a husky voice that you recognise immediately. 'Looking to get your hand back?'

'High Priestess Leesha, I presume?' you say, certain of the answer.

'Indeed,' she replies, trying to suppress a yawn. 'And I see Lucretia's pet Ganjee hanging from your waist so that explains your miraculous escape. I never did like those pests.'

'Pests?' roars Sussurus. 'You, a mere human, call me a pest?!'

'Oh, but I am no mere human... As you shall soon see after my pet here devours your new master, leaving me to perform the most delightful tortures of sorcery on your incorporeal form. Oh, what fun we shall have.'

'Wait,' you start, as the massive snake slithers towards you. 'If your serpent kills me the key will be lost to you.'

'So the Ganjee warned us. But then he's hardly proven himself trustworthy, has he?'

Without even needing a command from his mistress, the snake lunges for you.

GIANT PYTHON	SKILL 8	STAMINA 12

If you win, turn to **5**.

63

Putting your faith in Leesha' ring, you stride purposefully towards the sorceress. Another blast of fire comes screaming from her eyes, hitting you will full force. You shrug off the effects effortlessly, smiling at Lucretia's aghast expression. She barely has time to recover before you are on her! Turn to **163**.

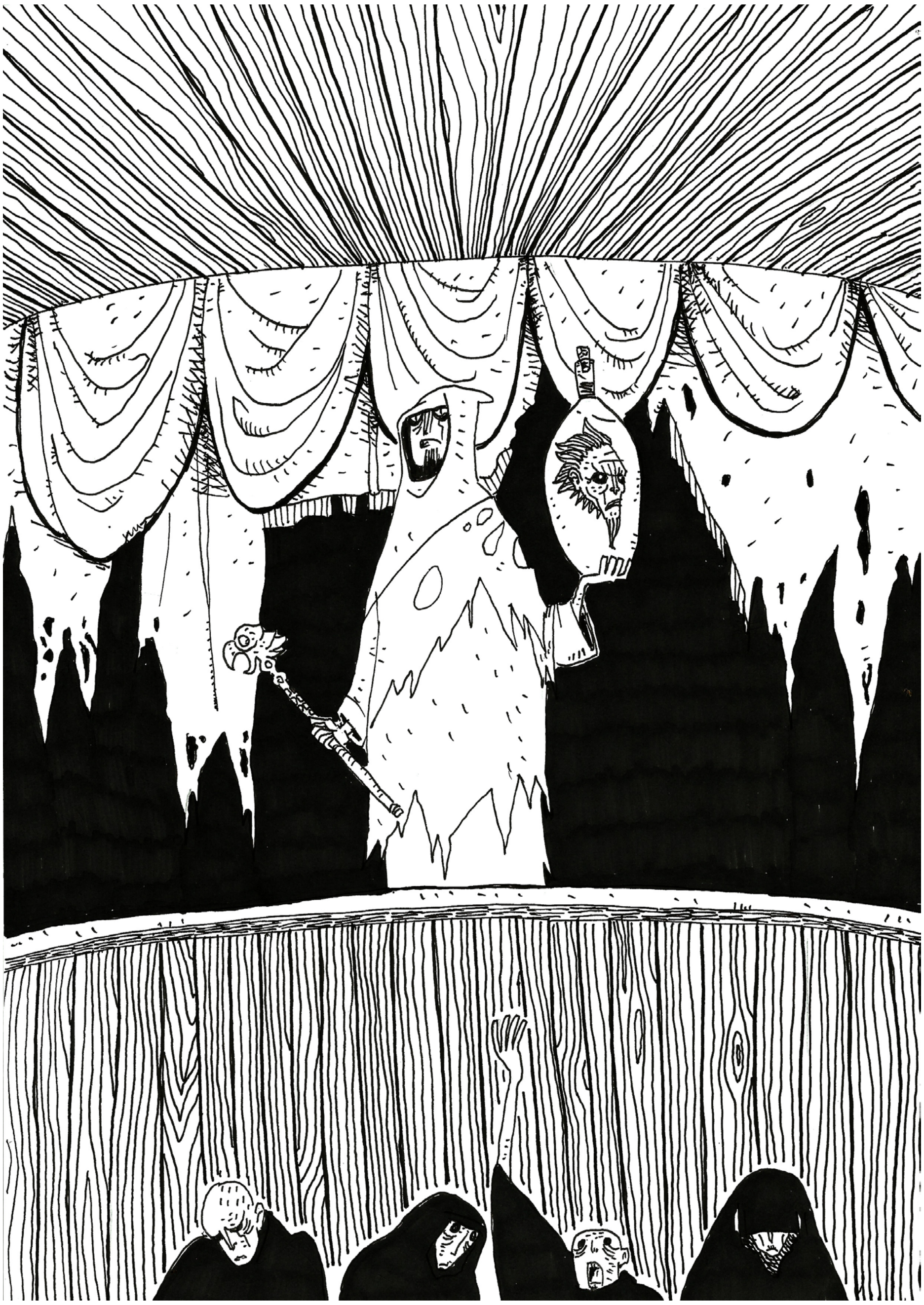
64

You take a cautious sip of the red potion. It is thick and acidic, and you struggle to gulp it down. As soon as you do so, you feel a surge of strength through your muscles. You feel like you could wrestle an ox! You have just drunk a Potion of Might! Unfortunately, the concoction is so acidic that it actually makes you even more thirsty than before. You dry heave as you walk onwards, your magical strength soon fading. Lose 3 STAMINA points. If you survive, all you can do is trudge on and hope to come across some water soon. Cross off the red potion from your *Adventure Sheet* and record a Potion of Might there instead. You still have some of the mixture left after all. Turn to **231**.

65

You and Tynar wrap yourselves in some old bedsheets and make your way to the old theatre. The two of you look quite a sight walking down Zengis' wealthy quarter in your makeshift rags, and several nobles scoff or jeer at you as you pass. Eventually, you enter the docklands area and your garb becomes a bit less out of the ordinary. The disused theatre sits right on the quay, its once-gaudily painted sign faded by neglect and the weather, rotting shutters hanging from dark windows, the whole structure supported by pillars which you hope are more stable than they look.

You enter the building to find the seats have all been uprooted, but still the place is swarming with beggars, tramps and ne'er-do-wells. None of them take much notice of the two of you as your force your way through the throng; simply another pair of woe-begotten souls seeking the camaraderie this court of sorrow has to offer. Upon the stage sits a man in black robes on a wicker chair, a tarnished sceptre clutched on his left hand. Head resting on a wrinkled hand he listens to the pleas of his subjects gathered before him and occasionally turns to ask for advice from the creature resting upon the wooden table next to him; a spirit trapped within a bottle: Sussurus. The Ganjee looks even more fed up than he does normally. How will you go about rescuing him? Will you:



Push through the crowd and demand the beggar king hand him over? Turn to **223**.
Ask Tynar to cast a spell? Turn to **137**.

66

The mimsy king happily hands over the crystal for Sussurus. The Ganjee is less enthusiastic about the exchange. 'You fool. You think all my arcane wisdom worth less than a mere magical bauble such as that? I take comfort in the fate you have subjected me to by knowing it will lead to you being squashed like a bug by the juggernaut, your gory remains a miniscule stain on his fist.'

'I'll miss you too, Sussurus,' you say, then turn to the king. 'There was a second part to our bargain.'

'Of course, of course, though I wish you'd reconsider. We mimsies tire of each other's company very fast. Strangers are always a pleasure, even if they rarely stay around long. For one reason or another.'

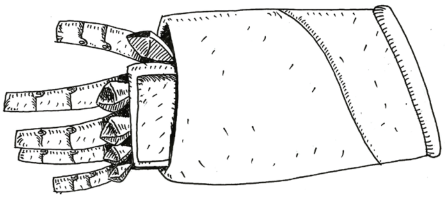
He beckons to a smiling mimsy at his side. The fishy creature takes you by the hand and swims upwards, dragging you along. You burst through the bubble and make your way to the surface, the magic flowing from the mimsy's hand causing you to suffer no difficulty in breathing. Eventually you break the surface not far from where you encountered the fisherman; there is no sign of him now. The mimsy waves at you, then dives back underwater. Unsure how you feel about the loss of the irritable Ganjee, you clamber onto the bank and head onward towards the Moonstone Hills, a trail of wet grass left in your wake. Turn to **136**.

67

You grab hold of the rod, expecting no more resistance than that of an old boot caught on some rocks. You are completely unprepared when the force of the tugging fish nearly tears your arm from its socket! You pull back with all your might, wishing you had another hand to avail of. The old man still grips the rod, his face beetroot with the effort of hauling back. Suddenly, something gives. The old man lets go of the rod in alarm and you are dragged forwards, landing head first in the water. Whatever has got hold of the line hauls you downwards into the depths of the River Kok. Will you let go of the rod (turn to **9**), or will you hold on and see where the aquatic being will take you (turn to **191**)?

68

A rank smell assaults your nostrils as you shove open the door to step into a room lined with hammocks, its floor covered with soiled clothing; you have entered the inner sanctum's servant's quarters. Two servants stare agape at your entrance. One is heavy set and as bald as the sleeping eunuch you saw resting on the couch. The other is a stout woman with eyebrows almost as thick as her muscular arms. Both servants grab wooden stools and charge towards you. Fight them both at the same time.



MALE
SERVANT SKILL 5 STAMINA 5
FEMALE
SERVANT SKILL 6 STAMINA 6

If you win, a lengthy search of these quarters reveals little but valueless knick-knacks. You do however find two small loaves of bread wrapped in paper stuffed under a pillow. Storing these in your backpack (add 2 to your Provisions), you return to the previous chamber. Turn to **153**.

69

Dire's eyes narrow as you stride towards him, axe in hand. He knows that this weapon can hurt him, but he isn't going to submit without a fight!

BALTHUS
DIRE SKILL 11 STAMINA 12

If you win, Dire vanishes into nothingness with a scream of rage. Not wishing to spend any longer in this evil place, you hurriedly return to the previous chamber, this time taking the far archway. Turn to **130**.

70

Until recently, vaulting over a wall like this would cause you no trouble whatsoever. But with only one hand, things are that much trickier. *Test your Skill*. If you are successful, turn to **14**. If you fail the roll however, turn to **34**.

71

The sorceress jumps backwards and barks out a harsh word of command, a green flash springing forth from her right hand. The flash clears, revealing a group of blue-skinned imps, armed with tiny pitchforks. The swarm of cackling demons clamber over one another to get to you. Fight them all as one creature.

IMPS SKILL 5 STAMINA 10

If you defeat them, turn immediately to **28**.

72

You struggle on, having no idea of which direction the lost city lies in. You travel for hours, covering little distance as your energy depletes under the sweltering sun. Throat parched, tongue raw, body unable to even produce sweat any more, you at last collapse to the sands, never to rise again.

73

Tynar shrugs his shoulders. 'Your decision. I just pray it is not a foolish one.'

'Pray all you wish, fool. I doubt your god gives a flying-'

'Sussurus, that's enough!' you snap. 'Thanks, Tynar. I know what I'm doing.'

'I hope so,' says the priest with a sigh. 'Good luck on your quest. Remember, the fate of Allansia depends on you.'

You thanks Tynar again and bid him goodbye, eager to head to the marketplace to equip yourself for the journey ahead.

'Promise me you won't bring me to that abode again,' says the Ganjee as you take your leave. 'The stench of godliness penetrates even the enchanted glass of this bottle.'

You continue on to the market. Turn to **39**.

74

Just in time, you remember to cover your eyes with your handless arm as the horrible basilisk arrives, its stinking breath washing over you. Luckily, Sussurus is able to direct you in the fight so you are not quite as disadvantaged as you would be otherwise. Subtract one from your Attack Strength for this combat only.

BASILISK SKILL 7 STAMINA 123

If you win, turn to **147**.

75

The next jet of fire comes flying towards you, but rather than engulfing you, it is drawn straight to the glowing amulet round your neck, the flaming fury absorbed and then contained within. Lucretia's mouth drops open in shock. 'But how? Your magic is surely lost to you!'

'Let's just say I had help from an old friend of yours.'

The sorceress turns to the Ganjee at your waist with an expression of raw hatred. 'Don't look at me, dear lady. It seems we are not the only ones who despise your very being.'

Enjoying Lucretia's discomfort, you stride towards her. Turn to **163**.

76

You keep your head hung low and try to lose yourself amongst the crowd filing its way under the archway. Not daring to look, you can almost feel the watchmen's eyes burning a hole in your back. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, you make it through to the market unnoticed. Turn to **15**. If you are Unlucky however, turn to **138.**

77

You enter a long, low-ceilinged room, its floor decorated with a colourful mosaic depicting a great crocodile feasting on a lamb. The walls are lined with deep shelves. Peering into them you see they are stacked with coffins.

'The resting hall of the former High Pristesses,' intones Sussurus. 'Really, fabulous decor I say.'

You walk to the end of a hallway to a sarcophagus, the flecked paint of its lid depicting a stern-faced woman.

'Now, there's a face I haven't see for a few millennia,' says the Ganjee. 'Kestis, the first High Priestess.'

Dare you open the ancient sarcophagus? If so, turn to **204**. Otherwise, you head back to the previous chamber. Turn to **153**.

78

The goblins attack you all together, shrieking at the tops of their lungs.

FIRST GOBLIN	SKILL 5	STAMINA 4
SECOND GOBLIN	SKILL 4	STAMINA 3
THIRD GOBLIN	SKILL 5	STAMINA 3

If you slay them all, you find the object they were covering is a life-size statue of a cowering goblin, its face stricken with terror. Puzzled by this, you search the fallen goblins but they have nothing save two gold pieces, a piece of cheese and their short swords, one of which you can take if you require a weapon. Deciding to pay no more mind to the now deceased goblins' intentions, you carry on towards the Elwood. Turn to **109**.

79

The light from the manhole soon fades in the distance and you are just considering turning back when Sussurus begins to murmur. All at once, he flares up, illuminating the cavernous sewers in an almost blinding light!

'I didn't know you could do that,' you say.

'And it never ceases to amaze me what little you know. Now, hurry up and find a way out of this place. The decor has hardly improved with light.'

You take random tunnel after random tunnel, safe in the knowledge that you have undoubtedly given the beggars the slip, but beginning to wonder if you'll ever find your way back to the surface. After some time, the tunnel you are following becomes firmer, and the level of foul-smelling water you are forced to wade through decreases. What's more, the Ganjee's light reveals some odd markings. Although you are no expert on such things, they look like dwarf runes to you. An alcove lined with red brick to your left leads to a small stone room that shows sign of use. A wooden table and chair sit in the shadows. Upon the table rests a pewter mug and a long burnt out candle stub. In the far corner of the room is a pile of rubble. Going closer to investigate, you see that the rubble seems to have fallen on a hapless dwarf, his face and one arm poking out from beneath the fallen stones. By the look (and smell) of him, he seems to have suffered his fate some time ago. Do you wish to pull his body out from under the rubble? If so, turn to **176**. Otherwise, you leave the dwarf's final resting place and continue on through the sewer tunnels. Turn to **167**.

80

Your throbbing hand is barely capable of rooting through your backpack, and once you find the bottle, it takes considerable effort to even grip it. Shakily removing it, you pluck the stopper out with your teeth before throwing the mixture down your throat. The liquid is bitter, and it takes incredible willpower not to spit it back out. However, a couple of minutes later, the pain lessens and your hand loosens up. Scant moments after that, you feel fighting fit once more. Silently thanking the dwarven hermit, you stoop down to pick up the piece of paper. A message is written in a flowing script:

> *My Dear Lucretia*
>
> *I hope you enjoyed this present I left you. By now I'm sure the pain is almost unbearable. The venom of the Cobalt Asp is the most lethal in all of Titan. The paralysis that is now spreading along your arm will soon fill your whole body. Your heart will be the last thing to go and then, my dear, you shall be no more. I am sorry that our relationship had to be this way, but the High Priestess of Vatos cannot share her birthright with an upstart like yourself. Don't worry though; you have left Allansia in safe hands.*
>
> *Leesha, High Priestess of Vatos*

Scrunching up the sadistic note, you take your leave of the bedchamber, leaving the headless body of the scheming priestess to rot on the floor. Back in the corridor, you decide not to explore the low ceilinged passage to your right and instead head for the iron door you saw earlier. Turn to **224.**

81

Standing, you shove the front watchman back. 'I'm not going anywhere with you!' you declare.

Both watchmen draw their swords. 'I love it when they resist,' says the second watchman with a smile.

Fight each in turn.

FIRST WATCHMAN	SKILL 8	STAMINA 6
SECOND WATCHMAN	SKILL 7	STAMINA 5

If at any time in the combat you wish to surrender, turn to **43**. If you fight on and defeat both guards however, turn to **177**.

82

Fang-Zen brings the pommel of his sword smacking into your chest, knocking you back to the top of the basement stairs. Seeing an opportunity for a swift victory, the mercenary whirls, whipping out with a high spinning kick, sending you flying through the air to land with a crash at the bottom of the stairs (lose 3 STAMINA points). You lie stunned while a grin spreads across the mercenary's face as he looks down upon you. Turn to **23**.

83

'Damn you!' screams Sussurus as you hand him over. 'I hope a giant sandworm swallows you whole and you spend the next twenty years slowly dissolving in its colon!'

'Oh, he is amusing,' chuckles the king. 'Well, are you ready to return to the surface now?'

You nod and a smiling mimsy takes you by the hand and swims upwards, dragging you along. You burst through the bubble and make for the surface, the magic flowing from the mimsy's hand causing you to suffer no difficulty in breathing. Eventually you break the surface not far from where you encountered the fisherman; there is no sign of him now. The mimsy waves at you, then dives back underwater. Unsure how you feel about the loss of the irritable Ganjee, you clamber onto the bank and head onward towards the Moonstone Hills, a trail of wet grass left in your wake. Turn to **136**.

84

Tynar shows you into his spartan, but cosy, drawing room and you gratefully warm your hand by its roaring fire. The priest pours you a drink of brandy which you drink down readily (restore 4 STAMINA points).

'Now, what brings you to Zengis?' Tynar asks. 'I assume it is not a mere visit to your old friend?'

You relate the tale of how your hand was taken and of Lucretia and Leesha's wicked plans. Tynar agrees to aid you. 'I have no wish to return to a life of battle. I have seen enough of that as you know. But I will help you in any other way I can.'

True to his word, Tynar gives you 10 Gold Pieces and a healing potion. This potion will restore up to 6 lost Stamina point and can be drunk at any time except when in combat.

'Is there any other way I can be of service?' he asks.

If Sussurus is still with you, turn to **209**. If not, turn to **155**.

85

Two of the rhino-men move towards you, halberd blades thrust outwards. Their look of determination is replaced by one of surprise when another rhino-man appears from behind a boulder. One of them beckons to the new arrival. 'Come and help us!' he grunts.

The newcomer nods in agreement, taking position behind the other two. Then he strikes! Your magical creation cleaves through the skull of one of the rhino-men before he even has an idea what's going on. The other two rush to fight your conjuration, eventually subduing it, but not before it has left one of the pair with a nasty gash across his chest. You leap upon the wounded rhino-man, intent on finishing him quickly.

WOUNDED
RHINOMAN SKILL 6 STAMINA 2

If you win, the third rhino-man snarls. Turn to **198**.

86

The mist solidifies, taking the form of a powerfully-built man, a flowing pony-tail sprouting forth from a shaven head. The spectre's face forms and it seems oddly familiar to you. You're sure you've seen it someplace before. You just can't quite put your...

'Oh, crap,' you say.

'Impudent peasant!' howls the ghost of Balthus Dire. 'It is not enough that you rob me of my life with your commoner's hands, you now dare to disturb my eternal rest?! You shall pay in blood!'

So saying, the ghostly Dire steps away from the pentangle, ghostly hands ready to tear you limb from limb. Ordinary weapons will not be able to harm him. If you possess the Javelin of Vatos and wish to hurl at him, turn to **143**. If you'd rather attack him with an Axe of Hacking (if you have one), turn to **69**. If you have neither weapon, or would rather not use them, the only thing for it is to run like Hell! Turn to **171**.

87

It takes the goblins some time to understand that you wish to aid them, but once they have gotten the idea they skip about with joy. 'Strong yooman kill big lizard. Even if only have one hand!'

The goblins lead you round the hillside to dark cave. 'Lizard live in there. Don't look in eye.' The goblins hang back fearfully as you enter the cave. Sussurus glows softly to illuminate a tunnel made of limestone, slime covering the rocky floor and dripping from numerous stalactites.

'Must you undertake every suicidal altruistic pursuit going?' sighs the Ganjee.

'Those goblins are morons and will likely be dead in a matter of weeks, whether you kill this basilisk or not. And what's more you endanger your precious Allansia by risking getting turned to stone for all eternity in such a fruitless endeavour.'

'Be quiet and keep your eyes peeled for this overgrown lizard. Its gaze shouldn't affect you after all.'

The tunnel parts ahead of you. One winding tunnel is slick with some yellowish slime, the other is relatively dry. Will you take the slimy tunnel (turn to **180**), or the dry one (turn to **13**)?

88

You look upwards to the great bird's feathered belly, ready to plunge your weapon into it. If Sussurus is with you, turn to **36**. Otherwise, turn to **145**.

89

The elf's slender eyebrows knit upon seeing the silver amulet around your neck. He lowers his bow and motions for his comrades scattered amongst the ruins to do the same. Hand raised in parley, he strides towards you. 'How came you by that amulet?' he asks.

'I found it on the body of one turned to stone by a basilisk's gaze.'

He nods gravely. 'Then it is as we feared. Tythil the War Poet is dead.' He swallows. 'Thank you for bringing us word of his death, human. Although we do not approve of your presence amongst these sacred ruins, or,' he adds, gazing down at Sussurus, 'the company you keep, you must be suitably rewarded for bringing us news of Tythil and for presumably avenging his death.'

So saying, he sets his bow down and removes his chainmail waist coat, placing it over your own head. It feels light as a feather, but you do not doubt its protective capabilities. The elven chainmail will reduce all damage you take in combat by 1 STAMINA point. You hand the silver amulet over to the elf and he pockets it gratefully. 'Now what brings thee to Daneth-El?' he asks.

You tell him of how you must journey to the Desert of Skulls and wish to make use of the teleporter. The elf points to his right. 'It lies just a few yards that way. Tarry no longer amongst these ruins than you have to.'

You thank him and hurry on to the teleporter, conscious of dozens of hidden elven eyes upon you. You reach the city square, scattered marble pillars and a scorched, long-dry fountain testament to the place's former glory. Just to the right is a great dolmen, made of three massive blocks of bluestone. A shimmering orange haze lies within the arch formed by the stones. You have reached the teleporter.

'See, nothing went wrong,' says Sussurus.

'Oh, shut it.'

You step towards the shimmering haze. Turn to **51**.

90

With the princess safely away from you, the mimsy soldiers spare no time in rushing towards you, tridents at the ready. Desperate to get away, you swim with all your might to the bubble's edge. You burst through; the sudden impact of the weight of water above you and the inability to breathe almost stopping you in your tracks. Somehow, you swim on, heading up and up to the surface. You make it half-way before your lungs give in. It is only a corpse that eventually breaks the river's surface, floating westwards towards the Moonstone Hills.

91

Not far from the iron door, you come to a marble column supporting a bowl of grapes. The grapes look ripe and juicy and your mouth waters at the thought of their succulence.

'I wouldn't if I were you,' says Sussurus, guessing your thoughts. 'They're most likely poisoned.'

'Poisoned? For what purpose?'

'To trick any trespassers who think only with their stomachs, of course.'

You purse your lips. 'You think they'd do that?'

'It's what I'd do.'

Will you dare eating some of the grapes? If so, turn to **133**. Otherwise, you carry on along the corridor. Turn to **197**.

92

You pull yourself to the top of the mechanical giant's head, eyes fixed upon the floating Ganjee. 'You never make matters simple, do you?' he snarls. 'I guess I always knew that you'd end up dying by my hand. Or should I say your hand?'

No sooner has he spoken than your hand, still glowing a vivid orange, comes flying towards you, its fingers curled in a fist. You duck and your errant fist goes sailing over your head before swinging back for another assault.

POSSESSED
APPENDAGE SKILL 9 STAMINA 2

If you win, turn to **235**.

93

As soon as you espy the elf, the axe glows red and you feel an overwhelming urge to kill – to wipe every elf from the face of Titan! Axe in hand and screaming a bestial roar, you charge on the elf, he too shocked to even loose an arrow. You cleave his skull, then turn to two other elves hiding together amongst some fallen rubble, watching in stunned dismay. You lop one's head clean off before slicing another one through the guts, his intestines spilling forth, a dismayed look still fixed upon his face. More elves rush forward to aid their kin and you turn to them, eager to spill more of the fair folk's blood.

FIRST ELF	SKILL 7	STAMINA 7
SECOND ELF	SKILL 8	STAMINA 5
THIRD ELF	SKILL 7	STAMINA 6

Fight all three elves at the same time, but for this fight you may do double damage! If you slay them all, turn to **173**.

94

You are just too slow, the blast of flame catching you on the side, sending you tumbling backwards, smoke rising from your scorched flesh. Choking and unable to move, you watch with fear-stricken eyes as Lucretia walks over to you, gazing down with a sadistic smile. 'Goodbye, peasant.' Her eyes flame.

95

You slam the ebony door behind you, breathing a sigh of relief when you hear no sound of pursuit. But is the audience chamber empty? If you left the bald eunuch asleep on the couch, turn to **126.** If you killed him, or sent him away, turn to **58**.

96

A horrible thought creeps up on you as you look down at the dying rhino-man. Throughout the battle, there was an emptiness, a numbness, a fundamental part of you missing. And the reason has just dawned on you. 'My magic... I've lost my magic!'

'Well, of course you've lost your magic,' says the Ganjee, regarding you with evident distaste. 'The primitive sorcery the "Grand" Wizard of Yore imparts flows through the left hand. And you, my friend are somewhat devoid of such an appendage.'

You round on him. 'You said you'd tell me who took my hand and why, Ganjee!'

He sighs. 'First of all, I would rather you did not refer to me as "Ganjee". My name is Sussurus. I know this contains rather more syllables than your feeble mind is used to dealing with, but I'd be grateful if you at least make an attempt to use it. Secondly, your hand was taken by Lucretia Dire and High Priestess Leesha of Vatos.'

'Lucre– Why?'

Sussurus chuckles, a deep rumbling sound. 'Oh, how I love watching you humans struggle with comprehending such simple ideas. Let me ask you a question. When you slew her husband, did you feel a strange sensation immediately afterwards?'

You pause for a second. A vague memory of a tingling in your left hand after defeating Dire surfaces. At the time you just thought it was the elation of victory.

'I can see by your furrowed eyebrows that some memory is surfacing in the dim recesses you call a brain. Well, that sensation was the key to the Juggernaut transferring from Dire's hand to your own.'

'The key to the Juggernaut?'

'Yes. In the glory days of Vatos, the city held the surrounding lands in fear, its greatest weapon the Juggernaut, a forty foot high automaton, capable of unleashing mass destruction and nigh on invulnerable to attack. It could only be powered by one who held the key within his left hand. The rulers of Vatos held the key at that time and passed it down the line of succession. How they achieved this is long forgotten.'

'So how did this key end up with Balthus Dire then?'

'Over the centuries, Vatos became insular, its ruling family caught up in constant schemes for power. The Juggernaut fell into disuse and the world gradually forgot about the city. Eventually the high priestesses of the city gained full rulership of it, but they had few interests outside their own decadent luxuries. They even forgot where in the city the Juggernaut was housed. The wizard Arcturus, great-uncle of Leesha, was the last man of Vatos to possess the key. Tired of life in Vatos, he journeyed Allansia, eventually encountering the wizard Volgera Darkstorm. The two soon argued and an incredible battle of arcane forces occurred. Darkstorm slew Arcturus and in doing so the key transferred to him, considering him worthy to command the Juggernaut. Of course, Darkstorm had no idea he now possessed the key, let alone the location of the Juggernaut. Darkstorm was in turn killed by one of his students: Balthus Dire.'

'And I slew Dire.'

'Indeed. And so the key fell to you. That is, until your hand was removed. The Juggernaut was rediscovered by some upstart mage by the name of Malbordus while he searched Vatos for its fabled dragon artefacts. Seeing a chance to return her city to its former glory, Leesha tracked down the location of the key, learning of the fate of Balthus Dire from his wife. The two of them decided to join forces to capture you and to use the key to their own ends.'

'And they couldn't just kill me for it?'

'No. At least they couldn't just murder you. It had to be a fair fight and neither was keen to take you on at your full power for some reason.'

You nod, absorbing all this information. 'Then I must stop them. They cannot be allowed to unleash the Juggernaut on Allansia once more.'

You hurriedly search Brus' body, taking a backpack containing two portions of provisions and a water flask. Sadly, with just one-hand you cannot wield his halberd. You then start towards the exit.

'What about me?' yells Sussurus.

You turn to him. 'What about you?'

'You can't just leave me here! I have aided you; you owe me. Take me with you.'

'Couldn't I just open your bottle and free you?'

'No. The bottle is enchanted by

Lucretia’s magic. It cannot be unstoppered or smashed until she undoes the spell. Or,’ he smiles, ‘she dies. So you see I have as much at stake in foiling her plans as you.’

The Ganjee speaks sense, but can you trust such an evil creature? Will you take him with you (turn to **169),** or not (turn to **41**)?

97

With Fang-Zen dealt with, Pen Ty Kora places a hand on your shoulder and leads you out of the cave, down the narrow steps. At the base he takes out a mouth organ, twisted fingers pressing it to his lips. A rousing melody comes forth, a sweeping tune that seems much louder than such a small harmonica should be capable of. It reverberates about the hills long after the Healer ceases to play. When the music at last fades, a great neighing rings out. A shape appears in the sky, wheeling towards the two of you. At first, you think it must be a great bird and worry that the roc has returned. But as it nears you see it is no bird, but a winged horse: a Pegasus! The Pegasus lands a few feet away, letting out a whinny. The healer comes close to the magnificent beast, stroking its muzzle with a calloused hand.

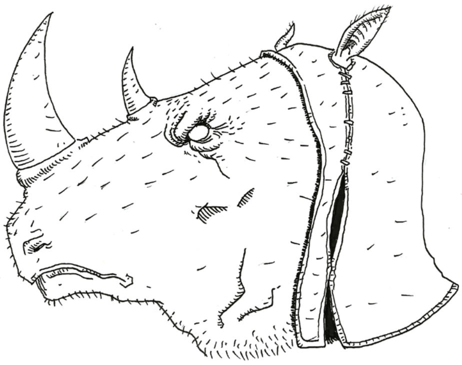
‘Clasticus here will be able to carry you all the way to the Desert of Skulls within a few hours.’

If Sussurus is with you, turn to **190**. Otherwise, turn to **160**.

98

You dash round the corner, crashing head-first into a handcart overladen with chicken coops! You tumble forwards, cracking wood and distressed chickens falling on top of you, a deafening crescendo of clucks and a flurry of feathers all about. You lie there stunned for several seconds, the outraged cart owner’s moans barely registering. At last you rise to your feet, wiping feathers and worrying white smears from your clothing. At least there is no sign of the beggars.

You stagger away, paying no heed to the swearing cart owner. ‘Well, that could have gone worse,’ you remark to Sussurus.



There is no response.

Looking down in alarm, you see Sussurus’ bottle is missing! Someone must have taken him while you were lying there. You panic for a second, but then a thought occurs; maybe you would be better off without the evil spirit. If you want to try to get him back, turn to **210**. Otherwise you decide to head to the market. Turn to **39**.

99

You plunge through the trees, brushing away drooping branches and swatting away curious insects. A winding trail leads through the undergrowth, the occasional cobblestone suggesting this was once a well-travelled path. After an hour you emerge into a large clearing and before you are the ruins of the city of Daneth-El. Little remains of it now but the shell of once-grand stone buildings, many crumbled walls blackened from sorcery. Ravens circle overhead, cawing loudly in the morning air.

‘The teleporter lies just off the main square,’ instructs Sussurus.

Boldly, you stride into the ruins, unable to completely ignore a nagging feeling that you are being watched. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to **215**. If you are Unlucky, turn to **146**.

100

The tunnel winds its way through the hillside, moisture dripping from the ceiling. There is a scrabbling noise ahead, but it appears it is heading away from you. Curious, you head towards the sound and round a corner to see the rear-end of a great lizard. The basilisk is clawing its way along the tunnel, oblivious to your presence. You stoop over to pick up a great rock, then hurl it with all your strength at the back of the basilisk’s head. It cracks the creature’s skull and the lizard falls flat on it stomach, stone dead. Turn to **147**.

101

You swallow the red liquid, grimacing at its bitter taste, but sure enough, you once again feel the surge of strength run through your muscles. Seizing hold of the sarcophagus lid, you lift it open with a minimum of effort, a cloud of dust billowing out from inside. Once this has cleared, you find yourself peering down at a skeleton, draped in rotted robes.

‘If anything I think she looks better now,’ comments Sussurus.

Lying next to the former High Priestess’ remains is a silver shaft. Scooping it up, you find it is a finely-pointed javelin, untarnished by age and light as a feather.

‘The Javelin of Vatos!’ breathes the Ganjee. ‘Even in the Nether Plane it is talked about with awe. Though your hand be unworthy to wield it, it may certainly prove useful.’

Hoping he is right, you strap the javelin to your back. With nothing else of interest in this mausoleum, you return to the previous chamber. Turn to **153**.

102

Although it is extremely difficult with only one hand, you heave yourself up, clambering on top of the automaton’s bent knee. Turn to **211**.

103

Raising the sword high, you bring it down upon the youth’s exposed neck, severing his head from his body. The nomads gasp… then begin to applaud. The nomad chief strides towards you, stepping over the beheaded corpse of his son without sparing him a second glance. Two bejewelled hands are placed on your shoulders and the chief kisses you on both cheeks.

‘You have proven yourself a great warrior, One Hand, and you are forever welcome among the Sanderi. Please, take my slain son’s weapon and go in peace.'

Somewhat stunned by the nomads' lack of concern about the death of their champion, you scoop up the bone sword, slinging it over your shoulder. The nomads also return your other weapons to you, offering their congratulations as they do so. Waving goodbye to the nomads, you head out into the desert once more, the sun beating on your back. Turn to **35**.

104

You see the enuch has risen to a sitting position, yawning and stretching his muscular arms. You duck behind a pillar before he notices you. He stands to his feet, heading towards the stairs. As he passes your position, you smack him over the back of the head, his bulky body hitting the marble floor with a thud. The matter dealt with, you ponder where you should go from here. Turn to **58**.

105

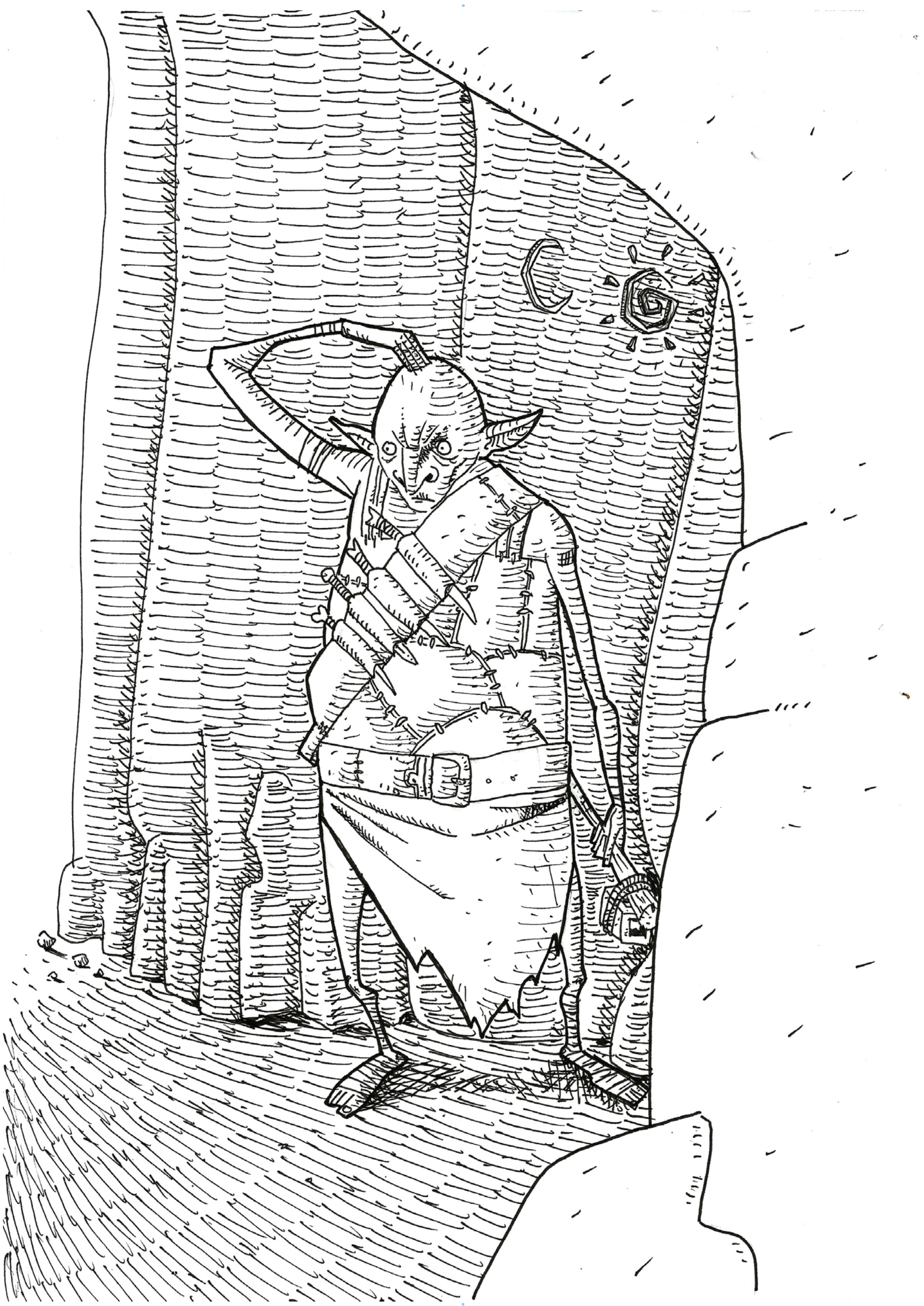
Tiptoeing across the echoey chamber, you peer between the columns for any doorways. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, your explorations do not disturb the sound sleeper. Turn to 188. If you are Unlucky, the sleeper proves not to be so sound however. He opens his eyes and sees you. Unfortunately, the way you are tiptoeing about the place screams 'Intruder!' So does the eunuch. Turn to **19**.

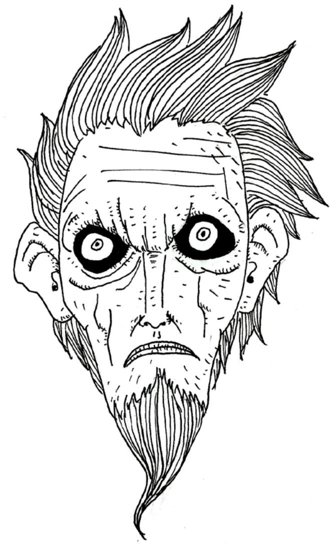
106

Fang-Zen smiles as he edges along the cave wall towards the exit, the wand's tip still fixed upon the two of you. 'Well, gentlemen, I think it is time to say goodbye. Thanks for fixing me up, Healer. Shame it has to end this way.'

With that he waves the wand. There is a puff of purple smoke...

When the smoke dissipates you see, instead of Fang-Zen, a stunned-looking goblin stands, still clutching the wand. The creature's clothing confirms that this is indeed the mercenary before you. He gazes down at his new form in horror before throwing the wand at the two of you in alarm and rushing out of the cave as fast as his spindly legs can carry him. The Healer sighs. 'I would have told him it was a wand of metamorphosis had he asked. Oh well, it should wear off after a few weeks. Maybe he'll be a bit wiser for the experience.'





Turn to **97**.

107

Fang-Zen lets fly with his crossbow, the bolt thudding into your shoulder (lose 2 STAMINA points). Screaming in rage, you fling yourself at the mercenary, who barely has time to discard his crossbow and draw a curved blade before you are upon him.

FANG-ZEN SKILL 8 STAMINA 12

Fight just one attack round. If you win the round, turn to **44**. If Fang-Zen wins it, turn to **82**. If the round is a draw, keep fighting until one of you wins a round.

108

Several recent footprints have been made in the slime. You follow them through dozens of near-identical passageways. The catacombs of Vatos is a veritable maze for which you are glad you have the footprints to guide you through. They at last end in front of a pointed arch, its edges clad with great blocks of basalt. You step through it, following a passage of chipped stone until it ends at two large brass double doors. Snoring loudly, his back against the passage wall, is an armoured rhino-man.

'Quick, kill him before he raises the alarms,' hisses Sussurus.

'I can't do that,' you protest.

'Fine. Hey you,' he shouts. 'Wake up! Time to be killed!'

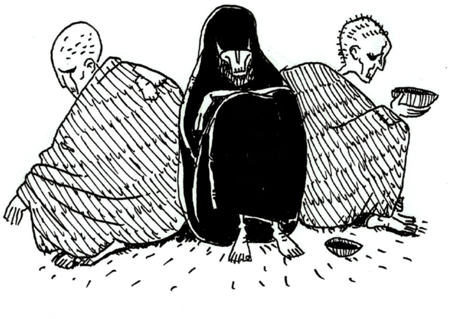
The rhino-man's eyes pop open and he gives a grunt of alarm at the sight of you. Before he can stumble to his feet, you kick him hard in the face, the back of his head cracking against the stonework, caving his skull in.

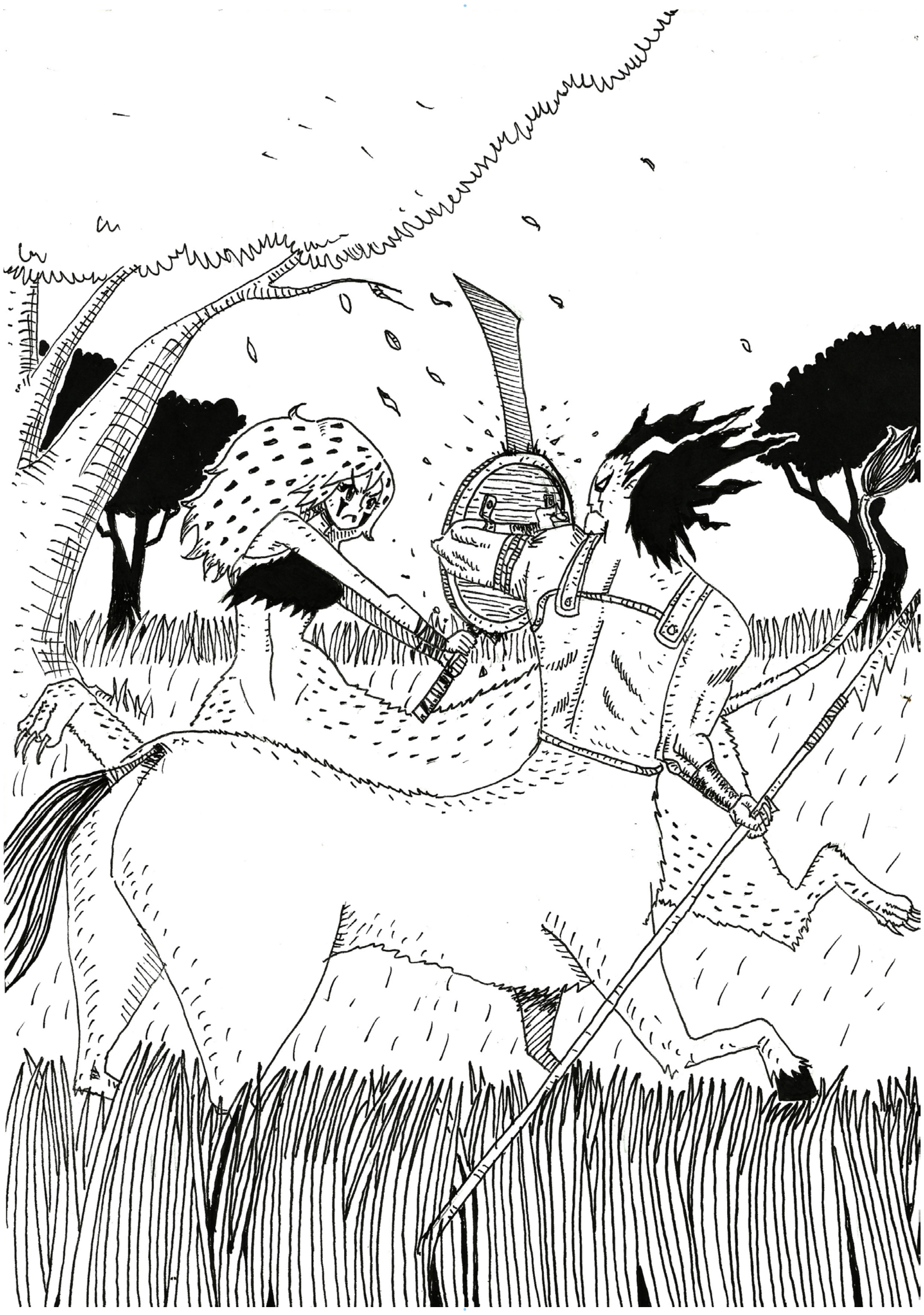
'Was that so very different to stabbing him while he was asleep? I feel I shall never understand gallantry' asks the Ganjee.

'I'll be glad to be rid of you when all this is over,' you grumble.

'Oh, sometimes you wound with your words,' mocks Sussurus.

Ignoring him, you push open one of the heavy double doors, stepping forth into a brightly-lit room. Turn to **131**.





109

You travel on for several hours, availing of the river to keep your flask full; you'll need the water once you reach the desert. You get a few hours' sleep amongst a group of boulders, instructing Sussurus to keep his eyes peeled for any nocturnal predators. You awaken in the morning slightly refreshed (restore 3 STAMINA points) and continue onwards.

Just before midday, you spot the tree-line of Elwood Forest ahead. Quickening your pace, you are drawn by the sounds of battle coming from the edge of the trees. Sure enough, soon you spot a fight between two inhuman combatants. The first is a centaur, bearded and barrel-chested, armed with a spear which he stabs repeatedly at a female felinaur. This creature's long blonde tresses match the colour of her lion-like lower half. She scratches at the centaur with her front paws while slashing at his face with a curved dagger.

'Well, that's not something you see every day,' remarks Sussurus. 'I suggest leaving them to it. We cannot afford the distraction.'

Good advice perhaps, but maybe you feel the urge to wade into this conflict? If you wish to do so, will you aid the centaur (turn to **196**),the felinaur (turn to **206**), or will you follow the Ganjee's advice and head into the Elwood (turn to **99**)?

110

It is too much for you. You soon pass out. Once the beggars tire of batting about your unconscious body, you are cut down and stabbed. And then Tynar is hauled up and the sport begins once more.

111

Luckily, the sleeping mimsy professor shows no signs of stirring as you rummage amongst the potions. Remembering that you saw the mimsies outside consuming green and purple potions, you decide one of these is most likely to help you survive outside the bubble. Will you try a green potion (turn to **164**), or a purple potion (turn to **6**)?

112

The Calacorm snarls, raising its club.

CALACORM SKILL 8 STAMINA 8

If you win, you hurry on through the archway. Turn to **141**.

113

Lose 2 LUCK points for forcing your friend to break his solemn vow. He places both ring fingers together and begins to mutter mystical words in a language even someone mage-trained like yourself does not know. His voice rises on the final word of his spell and he raises his arms dramatically. A yellow mist seeps forth. You quickly cover your face in your rags as it spreads over the multitude of beggars. In seconds all have crumpled to the ground, snoring loudly. Tynar holds his side and grits his teeth; it has been some time since he has had to use such a spell. You thank him and clamber up onto the stage, tiptoeing past the sleeping king on his throne. But as you pass he springs to life and seizes you by the wrist. 'You think I'm too dumb to cover my face when I see some deadly mist dropping my loyal subjects?!' he snaps, covering you in spittle.

You pull away from him and prepare to fight as he swings his gaudy sceptre at you.

BEGGAR KING SKILL 7 STAMINA 6

If you win, you grab hold of Sussurus' bottle. 'Thank the fires of Hell,' he mutters. 'And I thought your company was dull.'

The Ganjee's bottle tucked under your arm, you follow Tynar out of the theatre and back onto the street. Turn to **194**.

114

The Healer's home lies amongst the Moonstone Hills, about a day and a half's journey to the south west. You set off from Zengis, following the River Kok westward. You can see the hills looming in the distance, but for now the ground is level and pleasant, cultivated fields of wheat stretching into the distance. The only folk you see are ruddy-faced farmers who wave at you as you pass their homesteads, seemingly without any cares in the world. You can keep your flask filled from the waters of the nearby river and you even find a grove of apple trees to satiate your hunger. It is while you are walking along, munching on an apple, that you spot the fisherman. His legs braced on the northern bank of the river, the effort of hauling in his catch is causing the stout-bodied man's face to turn a bright red that contrasts sharply with his fiercely white beard. 'By the gods!' he wheezes as you wander over to him. 'Even the great leviathan never gave me as much trouble as whatever beast of the depths I've snagged here!'

Will you offer to help him haul in his catch? If so, turn to **67**. Otherwise, you wish the man good luck and continue on westward. Turn to **136**.

115

The pegasus lands on the desert sands with a thud. Hastily, you leap from its back and command it to head home. The pegasus gallops away from the nomads, taking to the skies just as they reach you, bows drawn. A scar-faced man in a purple head cloth, presumably their leader, looks down upon you from atop a dune, a cruel curl to his fat lower lip. 'Take him,' he commands.

With so many arrows trained on you, resistance would be futile. You are quickly bound and thrown over the back of one of the camels, head and legs dangling either side of the foul-smelling beast. The leader gives a command to move on and the procession of camels clambers over the dunes, taking you to Gods know where. Turn to **26**.

116

Fang-Zen's eyebrows shoot up in alarm as you charge towards him. Panicked, he drops the wand and draws a dagger from his bandolier.

FANG-ZEN SKILL 8 STAMINA 11

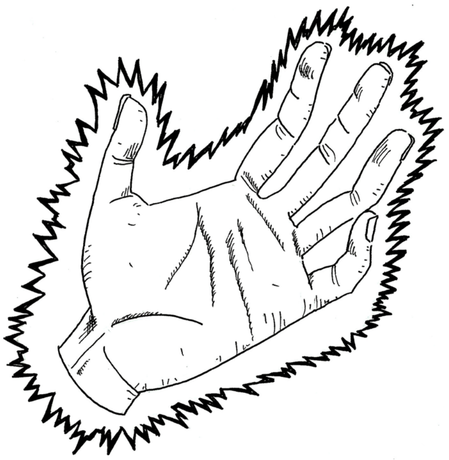
If you reduce him to 3 STAMINA points or less, the mercenary pushes past you and runs out the cave exit, disappearing down the crooked steps. You decide him not worth the effort of pursuing. Turn to **97**.

117

The pile shudders and several heavy blocks of stone tumble downwards. One cracks your good hand and you howl in pain (lose 1 Stamina point and 1 Skill point). Sucking on your throbbing hand, you try to ignore the Ganjee's sniggering. When the agony at last begins to subside, you try once more to pull the dwarf out, being more careful this time not to shift the rubble too much. Finally, you succeed in pulling out the body, and the whole pile collapses in a cloud of dust. The dwarf's body is squashed, nearly as flat as a pancake in places. He has a glowing axe strapped to his belt which seems in surprisingly good nick. You untangle it from the rotting leather, marvelling at how light it is. You test the edge with a finger tip and a trickle of blood flows from the digit; a keen edge indeed.

'My, my,' says Sussurus. 'An Axe of Hacking. The dwarven berserkers once used these in their wars against the elves. Nothing quite so fearsome as an angry hairy midget with just two brain-cells to rub together and a magic battle-axe clenched in his hands. That's almost worth you making an absolute idiot of yourself just there.'

The Axe of Hacking will not only remove the penalty in battle you suffer from having no weapon, but will also add an additional point to your Attack Strength. Your pleasure at finding such a powerful weapon lessened by the relentless pain in your one hand, you strap the axe to your own belt and take your leave of this chamber to explore more of the vast sewer network. Turn to **167**.



118

Forced to crawl along on your hand and knees, you clamber over the rugged rock of the passage. A vague light is in the distance and you move towards it. You will never discover its source however. A horrible slithering and hissing sounds from behind you. You turn your head to see a massive python worming its way towards you, cavernous mouth open wide. You kick back at it, conditions too cramped for you to turn. Your boot thuds against the wedge-shaped head, but the snake takes no notice. It swallows your feet first, then your legs are slowly consumed in paralysing warmth. The snake's mouth moves up to your waist, and you punch at it futilely, exhaustion setting in. You pass out just as the reptilian lips come to your neck...

119

You hurry on from the ramshackle house that has been your prison for the past several days, navigating a warren of crooked narrow streets. People in rags stare at you as you pass, and hooded figures watch from the shadows but decide you are hardly worth robbing. A group of laughing children barge past you, sending Sussurus' bottle rocking madly.

'The indignity,' he grumbles.

It is only when you emerge into a main thoroughfare, lined with folk hurrying about their daily business and merchants hawking their wares, that you recognise where in Titan you are.

'I'm in Zengis,' you say.

A humongous bald man wearing a monocle and a thick black leotard with the highly accurate words "Big Belly" embroidered upon it turns to you. 'Well, where else would you be?' he says before carrying on his way to do whatever it is Big Belly Men do.

'Yes, you're in Zengis,' says Sussurus. 'And by now Lucretia and Leesha have most likely reached the Desert of Skulls. You'll need to find a way to close the distance quickly.'

You nod. 'But first I'll need some equipment. And to do that I'll need money.'

The Ganjee rolls his eyes. 'I can't expect you'll get many offers of employment with only one hand.'

Although he could have put it better, he has a point. You could try begging in the street to get some coin (turn to **37**). Or you could perhaps try to profit from Sussurus' mystical powers by turning to **18**.

120

Weapon still out-stretched, you stoop over and pick up a handful of small pebbles from the track before standing upright again.

'Look fellas! Gold!' you cry, flinging the pebbles in the air, your sorcery changing them to gold.

Beady eyes as wide as they can possibly go, two of the rhino-men dive to the ground to scoop up the false treasure, arguing over one particularly sizeable nugget. While you watch in amusement, the larger of the two shoves the other to one side and scoops up the nugget. A look of triumph crosses his face for a brief second before a halberd swipe from the other rhino-man knocks his head from his shoulders. The murderous rhino-man stoops over to pick up the nugget, giving you the perfect opportunity to end his life with a thrust through his thick neck. Two dead rhino-men at your feet, you flash the third a smile. Turn to **198**.

121

'Please, I beg you,' cries the priestess, dropping to her knees, hands clasped together, kohl smeared by the tears that run down her face. 'Please spare my life. I can help you! Give you protection against Lucretia's sorcery!'

Will you spare the snivelling priestess? If so, turn to **129**. If not, turn to **61**.

122

You tell the priest of how you came to be travelling with Sussurus and why you feel you might still need his help. Tynar strokes his chin. 'Are you sure you wish to be re-united? Ganjees are not to be trusted.'

'I've considered that,' you say. 'But under the circumstances I feel the value of his advice outweighs the risk of treachery.'

'In that case, we'd best see about getting him back.'

The priest leads you back to the court house where he has a whispered conversation with a clerk. The clerk looks hesitantly at you then nods before disappearing through a doorway. He returns clutching the bottle, the Ganjee glowering in annoyance from within. The clerk sets the bottle on the desk before you. 'That'll be three gold pieces,' he whines. 'Magical Beings Tax.'

You raise an eyebrow at Tynar who merely shrugs in response. 'That's how this city works I'm afraid.'

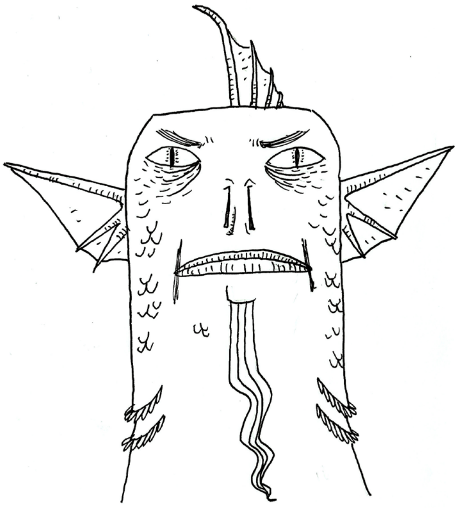
If you want to pay to get Sussurus back, turn to **172**. If you are unprepared to pay such an amount, turn to **157**.

123

You follow the felinaur along a winding track. Little sunlight can penetrate the thick canopy of foliage overhead and the fleet felinaur is soon lost to sight. You head onwards, having to grope your way along the twisted tree trunks on the occasions where the sun's rays are completely blotted out. You are beginning to wonder if you have stumbled off the track when you hear the sound of growling. A twig snaps from somewhere in the darkness. A loud rustle echoes out as some large creature moves through the trees. Another growl echoes, this time from behind you. A sobering thought hits you that maybe the felinaur you followed was not the only one of her kind to call these woods home.

'I would suggest that a hasty retreat be in order,' says Sussurus, unable to hide the nervousness in his voice.

No sooner has he spoken than the creatures spring! A felinaur barrels out of the darkness, knocking you to the ground with its mighty forepaws. Your struggles are in vain, its great bulk too heavy to shift. Another creature emerges and, without sparing you a second glance, slits your throat with its knife. Felinaurs are incredibly territorial, and you have paid the ultimate penalty for trespassing in their realm.



124

You wouldn't have thought it possible, but the eunuch's eyes widen even further when he see what hangs around your neck. 'Please forgive me, master,' he pleads, clearly mistaking you for one of the dark disciples.

'I did not mean to fall asleep. Only mistress has been gone ever so long and my poor back's been giving me gip, and I thought mistress really wouldn't mind if-'

'Enough of your blathering. Get out of my sight immediately. You are on guard duty at the oaken door until I say otherwise.'

'The oaken door? But that's never guarded, sir.'

'And since when do I have to tell you twice? Now, go on. Get!'

Head hung low, the servant scampers from the room as fast as his thick legs can carry him.

'You know sometimes I do see a glimmer of potential in you,' says Sussurus cheerfully.

Turn to **188**.

125

'Come on then!' you growl, fist raised. You must fight all three beggars at once!

FIRST BEGGAR	SKILL 4	STAMINA 5
SECOND BEGGAR	SKILL 4	STAMINA 4
THIRD BEGGAR	SKILL 4	STAMINA 6

After five attack rounds, note down how many beggars you have killed (if any) before turning to **208**.

126

The slamming of the door has awoken the slave. He gives a yelp of alarm and rises to his feet. Seizing a quarterstaff, he charges towards you.

EUNUCH GUARD	SKILL 8	STAMINA 8

If you win, turn to **58**.

127

You motion for the stunned princess to take you to freedom. She tries to struggle, but when you place the sharp stone closer to her throat she soon complies, the two of you swimming away from the mimsies towards another part of the bubble's shell. The mimsies swim after you, but keep their distance, terrified of you harming their princess. You flash them an evil look and they back away. However, just then, the princess twists out of your grip, swimming with all her might back to the city. Will you chase her (turn to **201**), or let her go and try to swim back to the surface on your own (turn to **90**)?

128

You fly on, but a lucky shot by one of the nomads thuds into the pegasus' side. The mighty stallion cries out, then falls, hitting the deserts sands hard and sending you to roll down the side of a dune (lose 2 STAMINA points). You stagger to your feet to see that the winged horse has not arisen; the noble creature is dead. Lose 1 LUCK point. Sickened by the nomads' cowardly attack, but having no great desire to cross swords with so many, you hurry off across the dunes, hoping the riders will be more interested in the fallen pegasus than you. Turn to **234**.

129

The relief is clearly evident on the priestess' face as she rises to her feet. Your eyes follow her as she opens a hidden cabinet in the wall behind the bed and takes out a ring fashioned entirely of ruby. She hands this to you. 'This is a ring of fire resistance. It will protect you from Lucretia's flaming eyes. I had kept it for myself, suspicious that she may betray me.'

'How do we know this isn't a trick?' says Sussurus.

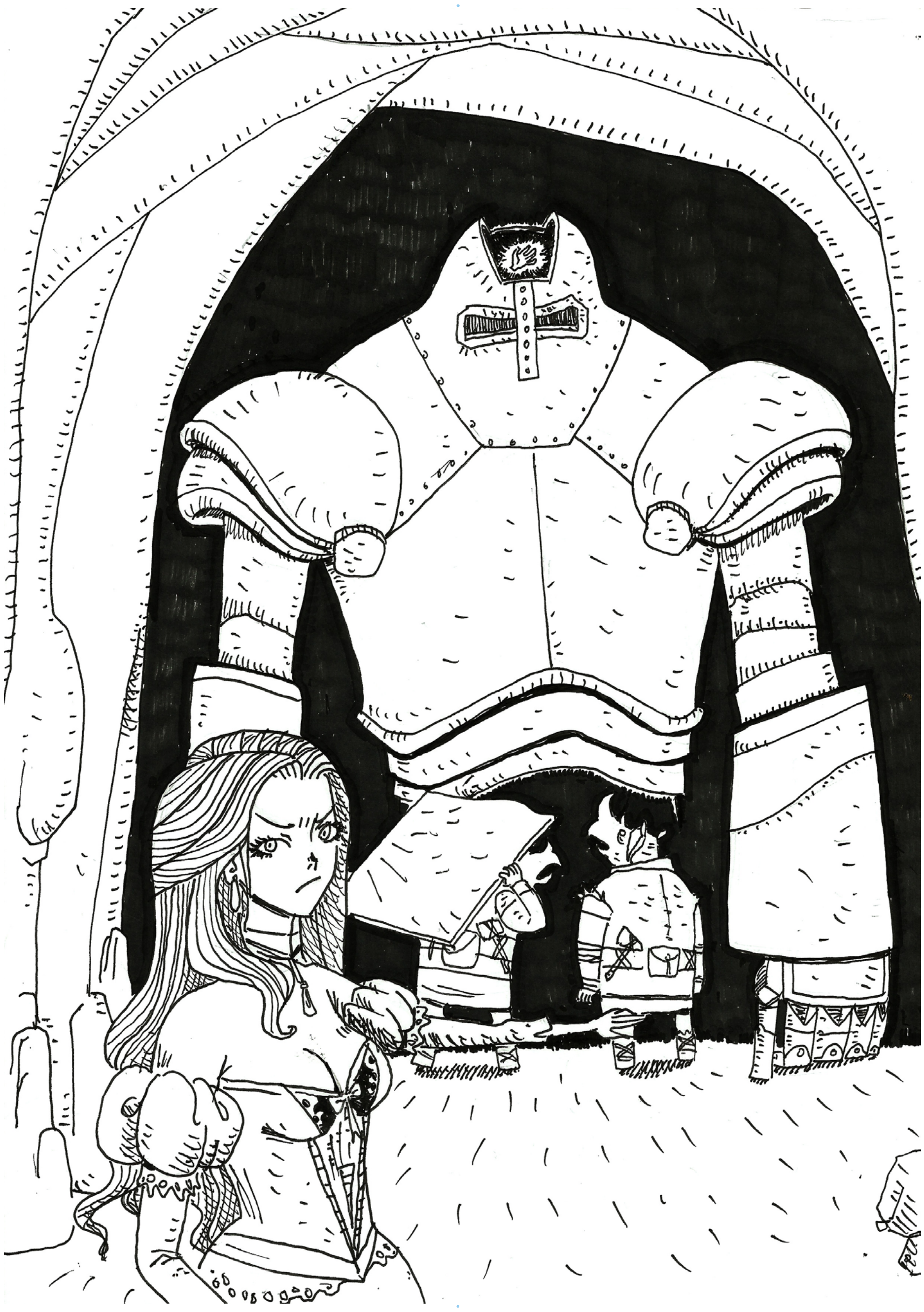
'You would doubt the word of a High Priestess of Vatos?! Give it here.'

You hand over the ring, obeying her imperious command more by reflex than anything else. She places the ring on a slender finger then put her hand through the flames of a burning brazier without any sign of pain or discomfort. She then removes the ring and hands it back to you. 'There! Now, slay her if you can. I care not which of you dies at this stage.'

'Much obliged,' you say, placing the ring on your own finger. You take the ring and move to leave the bedchamber.

'You will find Lucretia in the catacombs. Turn left and follow the passage to the iron door. Then take the elevator down.'

'She can be quite helpful when she puts her mind to it,' comments the Ganjee as you leave the room, following the priestess' instructions. Turn to **224**.



130

The archway takes you to a winding passage, a freezing wind coming from somewhere in the distance. You emerge into a great stone shaft, a ramp ringing its sides as it twists down into the darkness. There is the constant roar of a foul-smelling wind rising from the darkness. Seeing no other way onward, you follow the ramp downwards. Not far down, something comes rushing towards you. You duck and a throwing knife sails over your head, clinking off the stonework. Gazing down in alarm, you see three Wheelies, disc-shaped creatures with faces in the centre of their circular chests and hands where their legs should be. All three pull throwing knives from their belts, taking careful aim at you. If you possess a horn, turn to **202**. Otherwise, turn to **50**.

131

You enter a large cave, illuminated by lines of braziers running up both walls. Faint sunlight streams from far above, falling upon the massive bulk of a forty foot monstrosity of metal. The thing is bipedal, squatting with its massive fists resting heavily on the ground. Its surface is uneven, patched up with randomly shaped sheets of metal, though you spot that there is still a sizeable gap in its left side through which several gears are visible. Its head is wide and squat, large eyes of turquoise glass gazing down on you unseeingly. Above the eyes, the top of it head is a hinged lid. This lies open, exposing a metal plinth on which rests something small and familiar - your hand! In the process of hauling a large sheet of metal towards the unmoving Juggernaut are two rhino-men, directed by a slender woman with tawny hair, dressed in emerald robes. She spins round at your entrance, a cold snarl twisting her pretty lips. 'You. Kill him!' she commands the two rhino-men. The two hurriedly drop the lump of metal and race towards you, wielding clubs. Fight them both at the same time.

FIRST RHINOMAN	SKILL 5	STAMINA 7
SECOND RHINOMAN	SKILL 6	STAMINA 5

If you defeat them both, turn to **214**.

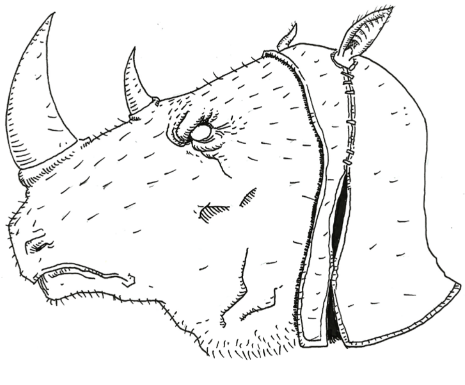
132

Seeing it has met its match, the sandworm sinks back down beneath the ground, the sand collapsing to cover the hole it made. Breathing a sigh or relief, you head on across the dunes. Turn to **35**.

133

Cautiously, you place one of the grapes in your mouth, biting down on its flesh. Sweet juice bursts forth, as delicious and succulent as anything you have ever tasted. Nothing that tastes this good can be bad for you! You eat more and more of the grapes, your aches and pains seeming to dissipate as you tuck in. These grapes contain magical healing properties and restore up to 4 lost STAMINA points. On seeing you not keeling over, Sussurus tuts. 'It appears we're dealing with complete amateurs here.'

Wiping the grape juice from your mouth with the back of your hand, you hurry on along the corridor. Turn to **197**.



134

Daneth-El lies to the east, its former majesty having long been absorbed by the trees of Elwood Forest. The going is pleasant at first, the sun warm and the clouds few as you cross field and hillock, the River Kok ever on your right-hand side. The only dampener on your journey is the constant caustic babblings of your Ganjee companion. Commanding him to shut up simply makes him talk more in defiance, and you are just considering hurling his bottle into the river and continuing alone when you spot something curious in the distance. At the foot of a rounded hill, a small group of goblins are gathered around something, muttering amongst themselves, seemingly oblivious to your presence. Will you walk over to them (turn to **38**), or will you ignore the goblins and continue on to Daneth-El by turning to **109**?

135

Soon you are sitting at the dwarf's table, a hearty fire warming your bones as you tuck into a bowl of lamb stew (restore 4 STAMINA points). Despite being for all intents and purposes a hermit, the dwarf is surprisingly talkative, regaling you with tales of his home amongst the clans of the Icefinger Mountains and of the adventures he embarked upon before deciding to hang up his warhammer and retire to the Moonstone Hills. You keep the details of your mission vague, not altogether sure how much you can trust the dwarf. You do mention you are seeking the Healer however, and the dwarf tells you his home is not far to the south; you should reach it within the next couple of hours. If you possess an Axe of Hacking, turn to **49**. If not, you thank the dwarf for his hospitality and continue south further into the hills, the kindly dwarf waving from his doorway as you disappear into the distance. Turn to **148**.

136

The sun begins to set as you reach the foothills of the Moonstone Hills. The going is still fairly easy and you make good progress through the rocky hillocks before the fading light forces you to bed down for the night. You find a small cave leading into a hillside and, after checking there are no creatures lurking inside, you settle down to sleep.

You awaken the next morning stiff, but refreshed. Regain 2 STAMINA points. Pleased that none of the predators that haunt the hills discovered your resting place, you strap on your backpack and set off to the south-west. You cross the River Kok at some shallows an hour later. At the rate you're going, you should reach the Healer's cave by early afternoon.

Your good spirits drop when you spot an ominous shape on the horizon. Soaring over the hills, mighty wings gliding on the breeze, is a massive bird with a razor-sharp beak and long, jagged talons. The roc screeches a war cry before diving towards you. Looking around for shelter, you spot a copse of trees between two hills about a hundred yards away. Will you dash towards the copse (turn to **158**), or will you kneel down in preparation to battle the great bird (turn to **207**)?

137

Tynar sighs. 'I have vowed to use my talents only for helping others. The life of battle is behind me now and I would rather not use such spells on my fellow man. But if you really think it necessary, I will use my magic to help you.'

Will you ask Tynar to do this (turn to **113**), or will you tell him not to worry and step forward to confront the beggar king (turn to **223**)?

138

'Hey! That's him!' bellows a watchman. You don't even have to look up to know it is you they are talking about. Knowing they will show no mercy to one who has murdered two of their number, you draw your sword, the throng of people fleeing in panic as two watchmen stride towards you. Fight them one at a time.

FIRST
WATCHMAN SKILL 8 STAMINA 5
SECOND
WATCHMAN SKILL 7 STAMINA 6

If you win, you hear the sounds of more watchmen hurrying towards you from the square. Deciding Zengis is far too dangerous to tarry any longer in, you flee towards the city gates. Turn to **187**.

139

As the youth strides towards you, a ray of sunlight catches the talisman. It is immediately reflected, straight into the champion's eyes. He staggers, temporarily blinded. You rush forward to press home this advantage.

NOMAD
CHAMPION SKILL 7 STAMINA 14

If you reduce him to 2 Stamina points or less, turn to **12**.

140

You tumble headlong into the darkness, nearly passing out from the rush before your skull shatters on the stone floor below.

141

The archway leads to a flight of polished marble steps. You climb up these steps into a large, circular room, ringed with pillars of the same marble as the floor. A thick red carpet runs between two central pillars, leading up some more steps to a dais topped by a couch strewn with satin cushions. Resting upon this couch, hands behind his head and snoring contentedly, is a massively muscled bald man wearing only silk pantaloons.

'Ah, the archetypal lazy eunuch,' whispers Sussurus.

Will you wake the sleeping servant (turn to **200**), or will you very quietly scour the magnificent chamber for an exit by turning to **105**?

142

Sheepishly, the goblins stand aside to reveal a life-size statue of one of their race. It has an almost comical expression of terror carved on its face and appears to be striking a cowering pose.

'Creature turn Shuzbub to stone!' wails one of the goblins.

'Creature lives in caves! Comes out at night. Hates goblinses!'

'Big Lizard it is. No look at gaze!'

Sussurus smirks. 'Clearly the goblins of this area are beset by a basilisk. Although how it can derive any sport from tormenting such pathetic life forms is beyond me.'

Will you volunteer to aid the goblins (turn to **87**), or will you leave them to their predicament and continue on to the Elwood (turn to **109**)?

143

You fling the javelin with all your might at the ghostly demi-sorcerer. It strikes him full on the chest, bringing forth a great bellow of pain and rage. Spectral hands seize the shaft, Dire trying in vain to pull the javelin from him. 'Damn you, commoner! One day, I shall have my vengeance!'

With that parting threat, the spirit of Dire winks out of existence, the enchanted javelin disappearing with him. Cross it off your *Adventure Sheet*. Having no wish to conjure up any more spirits, you hurriedly leave this chamber. Returning to the previous room, you take the far archway. Turn to **130**.

144

Realising an enchanted weapon is probably necessary to wound such a sorcerous creature, you swipe at it with your axe. A hideous shriek spills forth from the demon as the axe cleaves into its smoky mass, and you know for a fact that you can destroy it.

SMOKE
DEMON SKILL 8 STAMINA 10

If you win, turn to **192**.

145

Well, that was stupid. The bird gives a shriek as your weapon splits open its stomach. It loses its grip on you and you plunge downwards. You enjoy about five seconds of freedom before your skull is split open on the hillside below.

146

An arrow comes screaming from behind a ruined church wall, its point thudding into your shoulder (lose 3 STAMINA points). If you are still alive, you yank the arrow from your shoulder with a grunt of agony and dive behind a fallen pillar as two more arrows come screaming overhead. You have stumbled into an ambush! Turn to **205**.

147

With the basilisk dead, you are free to make a thorough search of its caverns. You find many statues scattered about of adventurers more unlucky than yourself. Expressions of terror, surprise and anguish are plastered upon their petrified faces. One of their number in particular draws your attention. His angular cheekbones and pointed ears betray an elven heritage, but what really grabs your attention is that he wears a medallion made of silver that hasn't petrified with the rest of his clothing. You take this amulet and place it round your neck (record the Elven Amulet on your *Adventure Sheet*). Satisfied that there is nothing of any more interest here, you leave the cave. There is no sign of the goblins so you bellow as loud as you can that you have slain the basilisk. The three appear from behind a clump of rocks, eyes wide in shock. They thank you repeatedly for freeing them from the creature's shadow. Gain 1 LUCK point.

Pleased with yourself, you wave goodbye to the goblins and set off once more in the direction of Elwood Forest.

'I hope that left you all warm and fuzzy inside,' said Sussurus. 'I'd hate to think I've saddled myself with someone who's completely selfless.'

Turn to **99**.

148

The sun has just passed its zenith when you spot a huge slab of rock. Carved into it is the rearing head of a flaming phoenix. A set of crooked stone steps lead up the side of the rock to a cave. This is the home of Pen Ty Kora: the Healer. The Healer was hideously disfigured in his youth and now shuns companionship, admitting only the sick to his home. Still, you feel confident he will allow an exception in your case. You have met him only once before, at a council held by your former master, the Grand Wizard of Yore. Compared to his contemporaries, the short-tempered loudmouths that are Yaztromo and Nicodemus, Pen Ty Kora is humble, unassuming and speaks little. But when he does speak, everyone stops to listen, for his words are laden with wisdom.

You clamber up the narrow steps, near breathless by the time you reach the top. The interior of the cave is lit by several burning torches, their flickering light falling on carved faces, moons and stars. A figure lies on a wicker bed, its face covered with a cloth. Stooping over him, stirring a ceramic pot filled with a gooey paste, is a man dressed in robes, his face horribly broken yet lined with care as he watches over the man on the pallet. 'My home welcomes only the sick,' he speaks as you enter, not even turning to look at you, so intent is he on his patient.

'I feel you must make an exception, my friend' you say. 'For all Allansia is in peril.'

He turns to you, recognition filling his bright blue eyes. 'It's been a long time. And a pity this reunion is not in more happy circumstances. What happened to your hand?'

'Taken from me along with the magic that lurks within.'

The Healer hangs his head. 'My condolences. To lose a limb is bad enough. But to lose one's magic is to lose one's very being.'

'Indeed. But there is more to it than that.' You fill Pen Ty Kora in on Lucretia and Leesha's plan and ask if he knows a way to reach the Desert of Skulls quickly. He strokes his scarred chin with a gnarled hand.

'I may know a way. But first I must finish tending to my patient. He was badly burnt, though thankfully I've managed to undo most of the damage.'

Badly burnt? It can't be! But sure enough, you recognise the recumbent figure's leather armour and bandolier of knives. He is lying very still, almost like he is afraid breathing will draw your attention to him.

'Fang-Zen?'

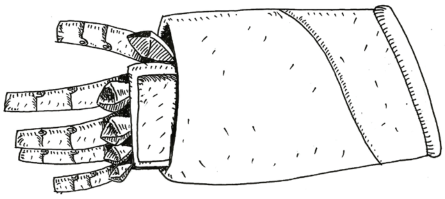
He throws the cloth from his face and rises to his feet. Although his face is red and his moustache singed, you recognise the Khulian sell-sword immediately.

'This is the man who captured me!' you cry, pointing an accusing finger. Fang-Zen curses and dashes to the side, picking up a wand made of ash wood and pointing its glowing tip threateningly at both you and the Healer.

'You cretins aren't going to take me alive,' he snarls.

'I wouldn't try to use that wand if I were you,' warns the Healer. 'It is not safe for those not trained in the ways of sorcery. Put it back down and we shall allow you to leave this place unharmed.'

Fang-Zen's eye's flicker between the pair of you. There's no telling what he may do next. Will you charge on him (turn to **116**), or will you hang back and wait to see what he does (turn to **106**)?



149

'Please, sirs,' you say. 'Is it my fault that people happily hand over their gold to hear their futures, yet complain when said futures are not as rosy as they had hoped? Sure, I could lie and tell them of great things that would never actually happen, but to do so would make me a mere charlatan, like so many who flock to this city and are far more worthy of being clapped in irons than I.'

The two watchmen look at each other uncertainly.

'Indeed,' adds Sussurus. 'For instance if I were to tell you that you will end up stabbing each other to death squabbling over a catamite you would not be best pleased, but that doesn't make it any less true.'

The watchmen flush red with anger. 'That's it! You're coming with us!' Will you allow yourself to be arrested (turn to **170**), or will you attack the watchmen (turn to **81**)?

150

Knowing the next few seconds could well spell your death, you rush towards the sorceress. A second blast of fire leaps forth from her eyes and you quickly dodge to the side. *Test your Skill*. If you are successful, turn to **217**. If you fail, turn to **94**.

151

You hand the amulet over to the spectral wizard, surprised that his translucent hands are capable of holding it. Volgera mutters over it in words you cannot understand. The amulet starts to glow brightly and the wizard hands it back to you. 'Wear it around your neck and you shall be protected from her flames.'

Thanking the ghostly wizard, you take your leave of the summoning chamber and head towards the other archway in the previous room. Turn to **130**.

152

Your gorge rises at the sight of the elf, the cursed magic of the dwarven axe compelling you to bring about the deaths of all their kind. With a preternatural howl, you leap upon the elf, axe raised. The dark disciples look aghast as you hack the helpless elf to pieces, an unrecognisable bloody pulp soon all that remains of him. You turn to the disciples, blood still dripping from your arms and face. The disciples share a look of terror and then race away from you, leaving by the door opposite the one you entered by, screaming at the top of their lungs.

'Bravo,' says Sussurus, his voice shaking with admiration. 'Bravo indeed.'

The rage subsides and you look down in disgust at the destruction you have wreaked. Lose 1 LUCK point. Consumed by guilt, and wary that the disciples will likely be back with reinforcements, you leave the room the same way you entered. Back in the corridor once more, you turn right. Turn to **91**.

153

You re-enter the lavish audience room. Did you kill the sleeping eunuch or send him away? If so, turn to 58. If you left him sleeping however, turn to **104**.

154

You scan the Juggernaut's body, looking for a way you could clamber towards the gap in its armour. Then suddenly its leg rises. You slide backwards, hand grabbing hold of the edge of an armour plate. With a gingerness that would be almost amusing in other circumstances, the gigantic automaton wiggles its leg, sending you swaying madly. Your grip deserts you and you hit the ground hard. Before you know what's happening, the Juggernaut's great foot comes crashing down, ending your life with a splat.

155

You are feeling a bit uncertain about leaving Sussurus in the care of the Zengis court. Bad company as he is, the spirit could still prove useful on your mission, and you don't much like the idea of leaving him to sow chaos here. On the other hand, you cannot trust the Ganjee and it is almost certain he would betray you at the earliest opportunity if you were to bring him with you. With that in mind, if you want to ask Tynar to help you recover Sussurus, turn to **122**. If you are happy to leave him where he is, you thank Tynar for his help before heading to the market in order to equip yourself for the journey ahead. Turn to **39**.

156

With your hurry to get away, you forget completely about the fire trap! As soon as your foot touches one of the enchanted steps, a roaring inferno consumes you, fire ravaging your clothes, hair and skin. Shrieking in pain, you tumble to the foot of the stairs, rolling back and forth in an effort to put out the flames. Fang-Zen hurriedly skips down the steps and helps to stamp out the flames, the pain of the burns so overwhelming you don't even care how hard he is kicking in his efforts to do so. At last the flames are extinguished and you sink into unconsciousness.

You awaken to find yourself chained

to the wall once again, the grinning face of Fang-Zen looking up at you. ‘Well, well,’ he smirks. ‘You made a bit of a mess of that escape, didn’t you? At least you permanently shut up that insufferable Brus anyway. That should make guard duty a lot more palatable. Oh, and I took the liberty of stuffing your Ganjee friend in a cupboard upstairs, just in case he takes it into his spectral head to help you again.’

You let your head fall forward in shame. You will not get another opportunity to escape and soon all Allansia will be under the sway of the Juggernaut.

157

‘You can’t just leave me here!’ bellows Sussurus. ‘This is the most mind-numbing place I’ve ever been to, and I spent two millenia trapped in the Abyss of Absolute Nothingness!’

‘Sorry, Sussurus,’ you say with a shrug. ‘Much as I enjoy your company, I prefer travelling with a full purse.’

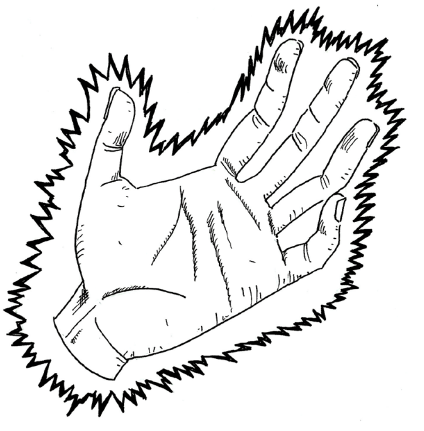
‘You can’t be serious! You’ll never stop the Juggernaut without me!’

‘Come along, friend,’ says the clerk, carrying the Ganjee into a back room. ‘There’s some drinking water legislation that I could use your advice on.’

‘Noooooooooooooooo!’ screams Sussurus as he disappears from sight.

‘I reckon you’re well rid,’ says Tynar. ‘Well, good luck on your quest. I just wish I could have been of more help.’

You thank Tynar and part ways, him returning to his home, you intent on reaching the market. Turn to **39**.



158

You don’t dare look back as you dash over loose pebbles towards the copse, but you can hear the heavy beating of the roc’s wings and feel the heat of its fetid breath upon your back. At last, you reach the trees and dive under the shelter of the canopy, causing the great bird to shriek in annoyance before banking away in search of less agile prey.

‘Been many a year since I saw a beast like that in these parts,’ rumbles a voice from behind you. You turn to see a stout, red-bearded dwarf leaning on a walking stick. Behind him is a small cottage with a thatched roof. Smoke pours from the chimney. The dwarf smiles disarmingly. ‘Then again, I don’t see much of anything living in these parts. I was just about to have a spot of lunch if you’d care to join me.’

Will you accept the dwarf’s invitation? If so, turn to **135**. If not, you thank the dwarf for his offer, then leave the copse, heading deeper into the hills. Turn to **148**.

159

Your weapon is useless against a demon composed of nothing more substantial than smoke. You must escape before it rips you to shreds with its all too deadly claws.

SMOKE
DEMON SKILL 8

You cannot wound the smoke demon, but if you win the attack round you can try to escape by *Testing your Luck*. If you are Lucky, you slip past the demon back out the door you came through. If you are Unlucky, you must fight on, hoping to be more fortunate in your next attempt. If you escape, turn to **95**.

160

You clamber upon the winged horse’s back, hanging on to its thick mane in the absence of reins.

‘Farewell, my friend,’ says the Healer. ‘I will send a message to Yaztromo and Nicodemus asking them to make preparations for the Juggernaut’s assault. I hope you will render such precautions unnecessary.’

‘I hope so too. Thank you for all your help.’

With no more to be said and the fate of all Allansia on your shoulders, you urge the Pegasus onwards. It gallops forward, spreading its wing wide; then, in one mighty leap, it takes to the skies, feathered wings pounding as it climbs higher. It moves at an incredible speed, the Hills rushing past you in minutes. On your journey, you espy the flaming summit of Firetop Mountain, the green swathe of Darkwood Forest, the dark spires of evil Port Blacksand, the picturesque fishing villages of Oyster Bay and the tall white cliffs of the Skull Coast. After only a few hours of flight, the golden sands of the Desert of Skulls come into view. The mighty pegasus flies on, determined to take you to the gates of Vatos itself. However, others are not eager to see the winged stallion complete this mission. A group of robed nomads riding camels across the rolling dunes take longbows from their backs and begin firing up at the two of you. One arrow skims the creature’s flank, bringing out a whinny of pain. Will you force the pegasus to land (turn to **115**), or will you fly on, hoping you can outrun the nomads’ arrows (turn to **128**)?

161

The Juggernaut’s massive left foot thuds down mere inches from you. Knowing this is probably your only chance to get near the contraption’s one weak point, you scramble up the jagged armour plating of its shin. *Test your Skill*. If you are Successful, turn to **102**. If you fail, turn to **45**.

162

The pile shudders and several heavy blocks of stone tumble downwards, but thankfully none hit you. You pull out the dwarf’s body, and the whole pile collapses in a cloud of dust. The dwarf’s body is squashed, nearly as flat as a pancake in places. He has a glowing axe strapped to his belt which seems in surprisingly good nick. You untangle it from the rotting leather, marvelling at how light it is. You test the edge with a finger tip and a trickle of blood flows from the digit; a keen edge indeed.

'My, my,' says Sussurus. 'An Axe of Hacking. The dwarven berserkers once used these in their wars against the elves. Nothing quite so fearsome as an angry hairy midget with only two brain-cells to rub together and a magic battle-axe clenched in his hands. It should serve you in good stead.'

The Axe of Hacking will not only remove the penalty in battle you suffer from having no weapon, but will also add an additional point to your Attack Strength. Pleased with your find, you strap it to your own belt and take your leave of this chamber to explore more of the vast sewer network. Turn to **167**.

163

Lucretia snarls and draws a long dagger from amongst her robes.

LUCRETIA DIRE SKILL 8 STAMINA 6

After one attack round, turn to **71**.

164

The potion tastes sickly and you spit it out immediately, worried that you may have poisoned yourself. It is too late, however. You have just consumed a potion meant to increase the stamina of mimsies, and it wreaks havoc upon your human physiology. Your stomach swells to ridiculous proportions, forcing you on to your hands and knees. Your arms shrivel, your one hand growing warts and scales. Your eyes distend, turning a blind grey. You try to call for help, but only a pitiful croak comes out. You are discovered hours later, the mimsies that have found you delighting in your discomfort. You spend the rest of your short life as a freak in a wicker cage kept next to the mimsy king's throne. Needless to say, your adventure is over.

165

As you pull forth the axe, the Calacorm's grip tightens on its club, both heads snarling.

'Don't worry, friend,' you say. 'I mean not to attack, but to offer you this magnificent weapon. In return for letting me pass, of course.'

'That's a nice axe,' whispers the right head.

'Yes, but what about our duty?'

'Oh, hang our duty. I want that axe!'

'You can't always have what you want.'

'Don't I know it. I certainly never wanted a lummox like you for a left head, that's for sure!'

'You know, sometimes your words hurt.'

'I'm sorry. But think how much more intimidating a guard we'll look with that axe! No humans will try to bamboozle us again!'

'Hmm, I like that idea.' The left head turns to you. 'Very well, human. You may pass in return for the axe.'

You hand over the weapon and the Calacorm stands aside to let you pass through the archway. Turn to **141**.

166

'Maybe I should seek out the wizard Pen Ty Kora?' you say to the Ganjee. 'His home is not far from here and if anyone knows how I could reach Vatos quickly it's him.'

Sussurus scoffs. 'The Healer? Only the truly foolish would consider him wise. Not only was he trained by the same mediocrity you were, he actually decided to dedicate all his powers to healing magic of all things.'

'Well, what would you suggest?'

The Ganjee clears his (non-existent) throat. 'In the days when the great continents of this world were as one, there was a sect of wizards who used to travel great distances using teleporters. There is such a teleporter to the Desert of Skulls in the ruins of Daneth-El about a day's journey from here. I suggest that is the heading you should take rather than wasting time with that glorified herbalist.'

The decision is yours. Will you stick with your plan of visiting the Healer (turn to **114**)? Or will you follow Sussurus' suggestion and journey to the ruins of Daneth-El by turning to **134**?

167

At last you reach a set of iron rungs in the sewer wall that lead up to a manhole. You clamber up the slime-covered rungs and lift up the rusted manhole cover, revealing bright daylight. You pull yourself into an alleyway where some rag-wearing boys are playing with a stick and a hoop. They watch you with wide-eyed wonder. That is, until you pass them. Immediately they screw up their eyes and hold their noses.

'Gods, mister, you smell worse than a donkey's backside,' gasps one.

'And you will most likely die of suffocation down someone's chimney,' replies Sussurus. 'I think my friend here would take smelling a bit ripe over that fate.'

The boys jeer and chuck stones. You hurry away, eager to reach the market. Turn to **39**.

168

'How dare you disturb our most sacred rite, heathen?' spits the disciple with the dagger. The other brandishes pointed sickles from his robes.

'No matter. Another death in the Chamber of Blood is no misfortune.'

You hurriedly take a position in the corner of the small room, knowing it will force the two men to come at you one at a time.

DARK DISCIPLE SKILL 7 STAMINA 5
DARK DISCIPLE SKILL 6 STAMINA 6

If you slay them both, turn to **16**.

169

'Oh, very well then,' you mutter. Taking a length of twine from a dusty shelf, you loop it round the neck of Sussurus' bottle and then tie it to your belt. This is a fairly tricky procedure to do with only one hand, but you manage it with a minimum of cursing and barbs from the irritable Ganjee. With this new unlikely companion in tow, you open the door to reveal a set of stone steps leading up.

'Wait!' commands Sussurus as you are about to take your first step. 'Lucretia enchanted these stairs with a fire trap. Only place your feet on every second step.'

Grateful for this warning, you carefully proceed up the stairs, emerging into a small ramshackle kitchen, filled with dust-encrusted pots and pans. There is a doorway in the far wall. You are just about to head in that direction when there is a sound of a door closing and moments later Fang-Zen appears in the doorway.

'How did you get free?' he snaps, taking a crossbow from behind his back and calmly loading a bolt. 'No matter. You won't be going any further.' Will you charge the Khulian mercenary (turn to **107**), or will you flee back to the basement in the hopes of tackling him in more enclosed quarters (turn to **8**)?

170

You are thrown into a damp, rat-infested stone cell and given a bowl of thin gruel to eat. You are stripped of your backpack and gold, and the scar-faced jailor also takes away Sussurus, mono-brow lowered in confusion as he studies the ghostly creature.

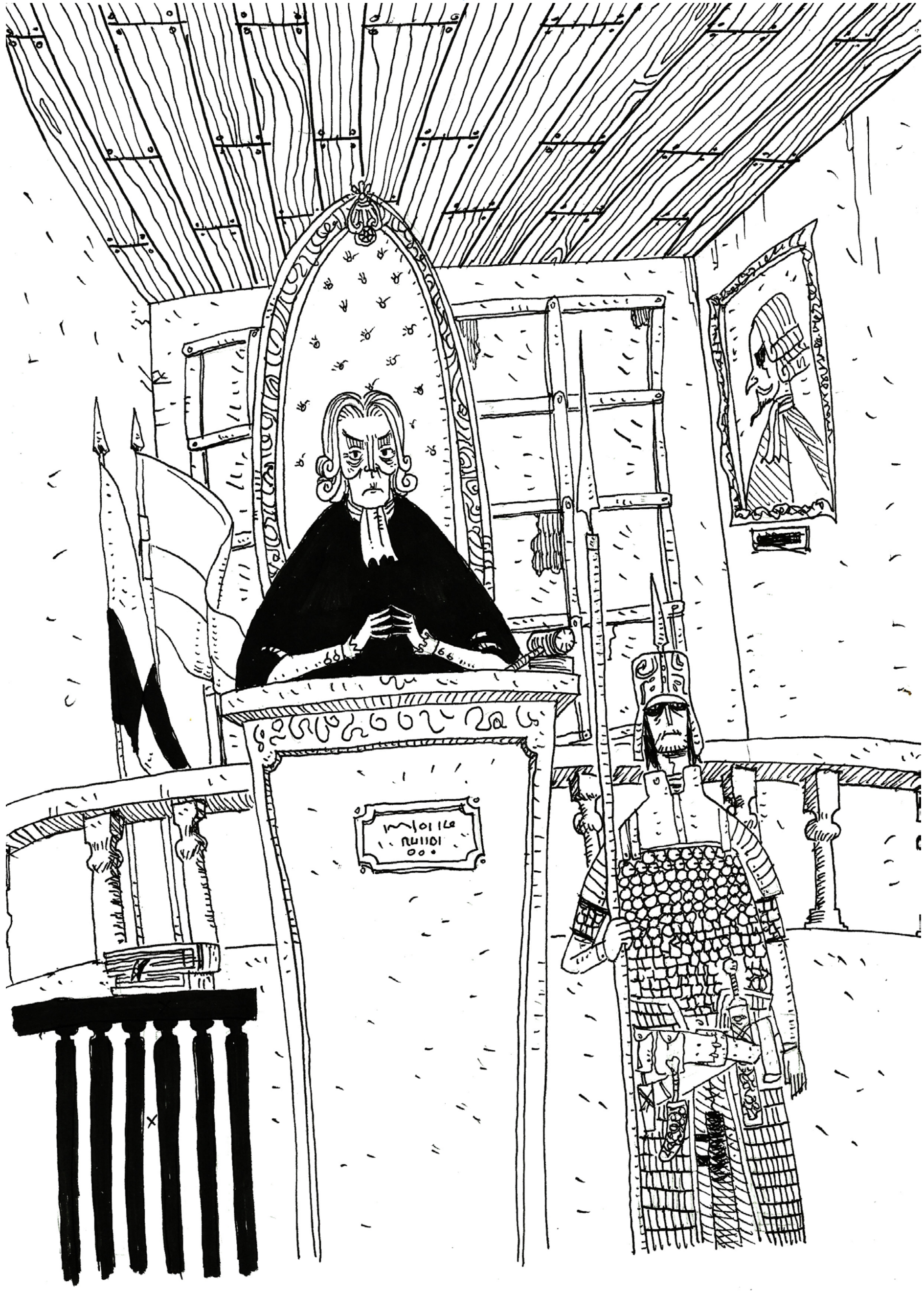
Hours seem like days as you linger in this fetid prison. At long last there is the clunk of a door bolt being slid back and the heavy iron door of your prison is thrown open.

'Magistrate'll hear your case now,' rumbles the jailor.

Two chainmail-clad guards lead you to a small court room. A stern-faced magistrate peers out at you with beady eyes while an uninterested bailiff scratches at his unshaven chin. You are shoved towards the dock, the two guards taking position on either side of you.

'Do you know why you stand before this court?' intones the magistrate.

Before you can answer, the door is flung open and in strides Tynar, an old adventuring friend of yours. You had quite forgotten the warrior-priest had chosen to spend his retirement from life on the road in Zengis. 'Stop this charade!' he cries. 'This person is no criminal, but a hero! If not for him, the Vale of Willow would have been conquered by Balthus Dire's armies of chaos. Whatever charges he stands accused of, I assure you that there was no malice in his actions.'



The judge glares at Tynar for several moments in silence. 'Your testimony is not to be dismissed,' he says at last, 'coming as it does from so respectable a citizen. But justice must be served.' He turns to you once more. 'I repeat. Do you know why you stand before this court?'

Well, why do you? You start with one point. For each of the actions below that you have committed, add to this score accordingly:

Fighting city watchmen: 2 points
Killing a city watchman: 2 points
For each beggar killed: 1 point

Once you know your total score, roll one die. If you roll less than or equal to the total, turn to **29**. If you roll greater than the total, turn to **225**.

171

You rush back into the previous room, turning in alarm to see the ghostly form of Dire in grim pursuit. You head through the other archway, running down the winding passageway beyond with breakneck speed. Dire's pursuit is silent, his footfalls making no sound, no breath issuing from his still lungs, but yet you know for sure he is just on your heels. You burst forth into a great stone shaft, your haste causing you to career straight off the narrow ramp that winds round its edge! *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to **222**. If you are Unlucky, turn to **140**.

172
The clerk happily pockets your gold (you doubt the city's coffers will see any of that!) before handing over the bottle.

'At last,' says Sussurus. 'You have no idea how mind-numbing it is in that place. All they talk about is ledgers, accounts and legislation. If this is what you mortals call civilisation, you can keep it!'

Uncertain whether you're happy to have the bad-tempered spirit back with you, you thank Tynar for his help. He wishes you luck on your quest before heading home, leaving you to make for the market. Turn to **39**.

173
The sorceress gazes up at you, the defiance fading from her eyes as her life essence leaves her. If you have a golden necklace, turn to **57**. If not, turn to **33**.

174
The alleyway is fairly wide, but is crowded with people bustling hither and thither, many of them carrying large bundles or pushing handcarts. You can hear the pounding feet of the pursuing beggars close behind when the alleyway abruptly ends at a low wall covered with graffiti. Will you attempt to vault over the wall by turning to **70**, or do you instead turn to face the three beggars (turn to **125**)?

175
The mist takes the form of a robed man, splendidly built with a long chin and an even longer wisp of a beard growing from it. Symbols of sorcery and evil cover his robes, and he flashes you an altogether unwholesome grin. 'Well, well. My avenger! I had never thought I would ever see thee in the flesh. Well, so to speak.'

'Who are you?'

The spectre chuckles. 'Forgive me, I sometimes forget that my reputation isn't what it once was, what with my former pupils trying to outdo me at every turn. Still, I believe your companion there knows my name.'

'Indeed,' says Sussurus. 'Volgera Darkstorm.'

'Volgera Darkstorm!' cackles the ghostly wizard. 'Champion of Darkness! Bringer of Woes! Master of Malevolence! Ah, those were the days. Until Dire and Marr schemed against me and brought it all crashing to an end.'

'So it was Dire who killed you?'

'Yes. The son of a troll waited until I was occupied dispelling Marr's Mist of Death before unleashing a Rain of Knives spell upon me. Why the key considered him worthy to control the Juggernaut after such a cowardly tactic is beyond me. But I take comfort knowing that you slew him only a few short years afterwards. The fool always thought he knew all there was to know of sorcery. Pah! He was not one quarter of the mage I was when I died.'

'But now his widow plans to unleash the Juggernaut on Allansia,' you plead. 'You must help me stop her!'

'Personally I don't give one whit whether Allansia prospers or burns, but I'd rather not see that cur Lucretia as its ruler. I knew her before she got her claws into Dire, you know. She was a mediocrity then and she's a mediocrity now. She did have one good trick however; she could send forth jets of flame from those beautiful green eyes of hers. Impressive, sure, but any mage worth his salt knows how to protect against such a cheap parlour trick.'

'I don't think you'd have got much sodium chloride for this one even when he had both hands,' says Sussurus. 'You'll have to show him how.'

Volgera sighs. 'Oh, very well. Do you have an amulet of some kind?'

If you have any of the following: an elven medallion, a sun talisman, or a black talisman, turn to **151**. If you have none of those, there's nothing that Darkstorm can do. 'Never fear,' he says as you turn to leave. 'The slayer of Balthus Dire has nothing to dread from one of her limited talents.'

Not altogether reassured by these words, you return to the previous chamber and take the opposite archway. Turn to **130**.

176
As you haul the body there is an ominous rumbling from the pile of blocks that cover him. *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to **162**. If you are Unlucky, turn to **117**.

177
Onlookers gasp as you send the second guard flying backwards, dead before he even touches the ground. Hurriedly you search their bodies.

'My, my. I had no idea you had it in you,' says Sussurus approvingly.

'Be quiet, you!'

You find four Gold Pieces on the watchmen's bodies. You may also take one of their swords if you wish. You glance upward, seeing the busy street now deserted, the crowd having dispersed in fear of your wrath. It could be risky to stay in town. If you wish to flee the city, turn to **187**. If you are prepared to stick around, you head to the market square to spend your ill-gotten gains. Turn to **39**.

178
You pop open the lid – and jump back in pain as a viper shoots forth and bites you on the hand. Lose 1 STAMINA point. The box tumbles from your nerveless grasp, the viper snaking away, its job done. A piece of paper flutters out as well, but you spare it no heed for right now your hand throbs with the most intense pain you have ever felt. If you possess a potion of anti-venom, turn to **80**. If not, turn to **232**.

179
Fighting back against the colossal waves of nausea washing through your body, you try to gather momentum with each swing, throwing your body back and forth.

You fly higher and higher, the beggars not even having to use the sticks to move you anymore. As you come swinging over the stage, you snatch Sussurus' bottle from the table. The beggar king leaps to his feet crying in alarm. 'He's taken the Great Spirit!'

'Indeed,' says Sussurus as the two of you continue to swing madly. 'And for the indignity I place a death spell on you all! Thj sijsicpm plftfegj bbfrjsh!'

The beggars scream at his arcane words and flock out the theatre doors, even their king fleeing with them, his tarnished sceptre lying forgotten on the stage. Tynar is released in the panic, and once the infernal swinging has stopped, he lowers you to the ground and unties your feet. 'Well played all round,' he says.

'Spare us your sycophancies and let us be away,' says Sussurus. 'There's no telling when these delinquents will return.'

Still feeling slightly groggy, you follow Tynar out a small back door at the rear of the theatre. Turn to **194**.

180

You grope along the tunnel, your feet constantly slipping on the slime-covered rock. Just as you pause for a breath, you hear a hurried scrabbling of a large beast rushing towards you from the darkness. The basilisk is coming! *Test your Luck*. If you are Lucky, turn to **74**. If you are Unlucky, turn to **2**.

181

The champion keeps his head bent for several moments, then slowly raises it to look up at you, brown eyes uncertain. You let the sword fall to the ground and offer a hand to help him up. The champion accepts your mercy and rises to his feet. You raise his arm and let out a cheer. The nomads stare at one another for a second and then cheer as well. The chief strokes his chin with a calloused hand, gimlet eyes fixed upon you. Then he laughs a deep booming sound that seems to shake the very earth. 'You foreigners and your strange customs,' he says. 'You will find not all in the desert respect such womanly virtues. Still, you proved yourself the victor, I suppose. You may go in peace.' He turns to his son. 'And you will spend the rest of your days no longer the son of a chief, but as a carer for the children. Begone from my sight.'

As the former champion slinks away, your weapons (if any) are returned to you and the nomads part to let you pass. Having no wish to wear out the little hospitality they have shown you, you head out into the desert once more. **Turn to 35**.

182

Stopping to scoop up a jagged sliver of rock, you swim over to the princess, whose bulbous coal eyes watch you curiously.

'Hello,' you say.

'Hello, man-thing,' she says. 'I have never seen one of your kind such as you before. The others have been cowardly, weak. You. You are different.'

You move closer. 'I want to show you something,' you say.

The mimsy girl blinks, scaled eyelids fluttering. 'Oh yes?'

You place an arm on her shoulders, acting like you are about to point something out to her. And then all of a sudden you have the jagged stone pressed against her throat.

'Sorry about this, but I simply can't spend the rest of my life here. You take me back to the surface and I won't hurt you.'

The princess gapes, terrified. Suddenly, a cry of alarm comes from below.

'Princess Piscia! The man-thing has captured her!'

You curse and pull the stunned princess away, hoping to reach the edge of the bubble. Before you can reach it, however, a group of mimsies wielding tridents block your way.

'That's far enough, man-thing. Hand over the princess and you will be unharmed. We'll even return you to the surface world.'

The mimsies eye each other after this statement, webbed fingers tightening around their weapons.

Will you hand over the princess (turn to **228**), or will you haul her away and demand she take you to the surface once more (turn to **127**)?

183

You break from your hiding place, a flurry of arrows soaring after you. Lungs aching, you leap over fallen masonry and potholes in the cobbled streets, the city square visible in the distance. Yet archer after archer emerges, arrows flying from every direction. Roll both dice four times. If you throw a double, an arrow pierces your leg. Subtract 4 STAMINA points and 1 SKILL point. If you roll two or more doubles, an arrow slices through the back of your throat, killing you instantly.

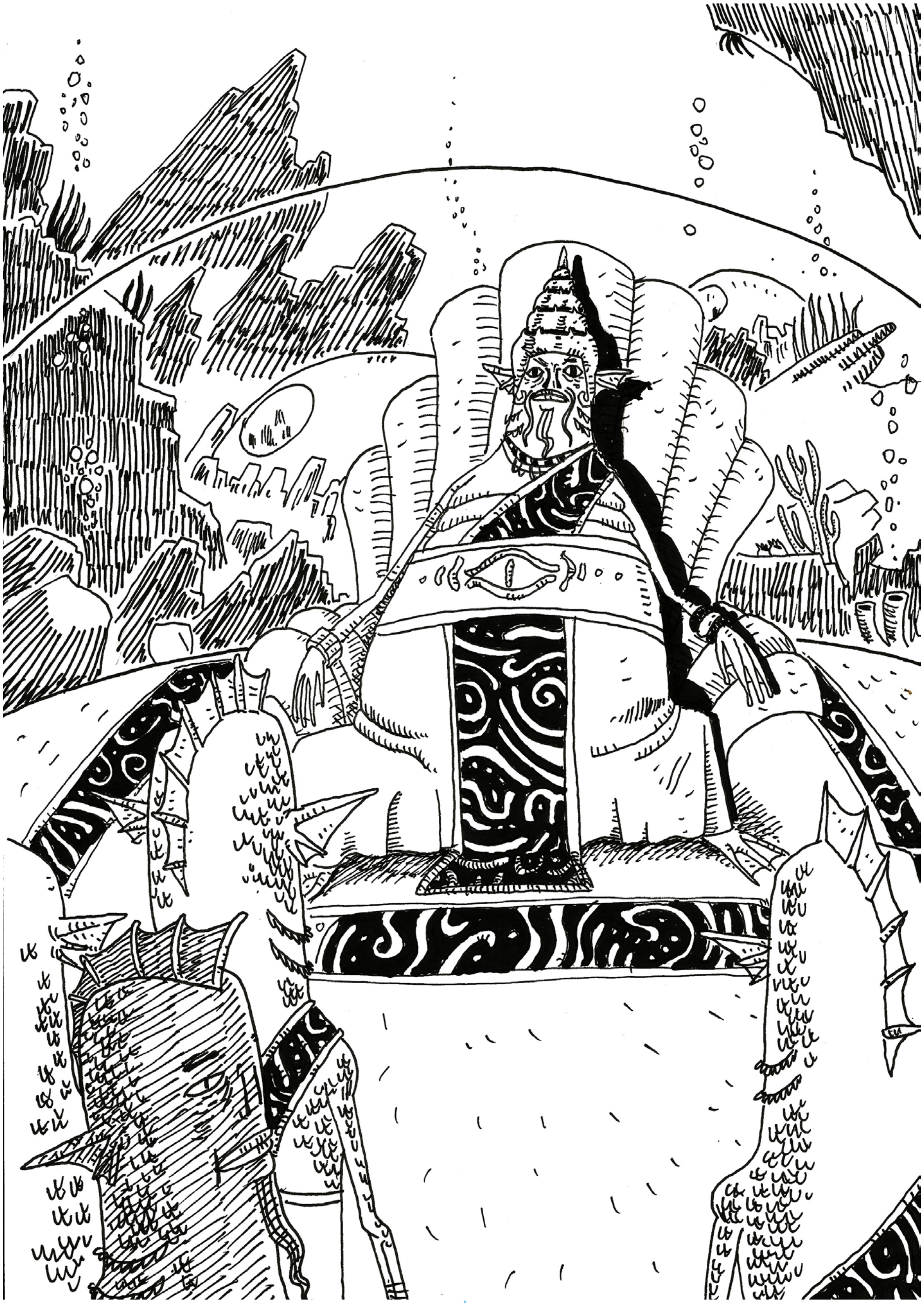
If you survive, you reach the square. Just to the right is a great dolmen, made of three massive blocks of bluestone. A shimmering orange haze lies within the arch these stones form. You have reached the teleporter. Turn to **51**.

184

You gulp down the potion just as the Juggernaut's foot comes crashing down, mere inches from you. You leap, the magic of the potion effortlessly carrying you up to the automaton's bent knee. Turn to **211**.

185

You make a quick search of the centaur's body. His spear looks a fine weapon, its shaft carved with intricate patterns and its point keen, but unfortunately it is far too unwieldy a weapon to use with only one hand. He does however have a bronze hunting horn inscribed with the symbol of a tornado hanging round his neck. You may take this if you wish. If you slew the felinaur, you can take her long dagger if you require a weapon. It will allow you to fight without a penalty to your Attack Strength. Having salvaged this battle scene of anything worth taking, you head through the trees to the south-east, entering the depths of the ancient Elwood. Turn to **99**.



186
Spotting you, the riders hurry in your direction, drawing curved swords. With trepidation, you watch as they surround you, camels seeming to regard you with as much suspicion as their riders. One rider wearing a purple headscarf motions to the others with his sword. 'Take him,' he commands.

There is no way you can possibly fight off so many. With barely a struggle, you are disarmed and tied up with thick ropes. One burly rider throws you over his saddle and the groups moves off, leaving you to feel quite nauseated as your head and legs dangle over either side of the camel.

'Now you know how I feel swinging in this bottle all day long,' laughs Sussurus. You fail to see the humour in the situation. Turn to **26**.

187
The early evening sun beats upon your back as you stride out of the city gates, the rolling green plains beckoning you to continue your adventure. Your enemies have a good start on you, and it will take some powerful magic to catch up with them before they activate the Juggernaut – if they haven't already! If Sussurus is with you, turn to **166**. Otherwise, turn to **40**.

188
A quick reconnoitre of the room reveals three wooden doors situated in dark alcoves between the pillars. Which will you open?

The ebony door?	Turn to **32**.
The ash door?	Turn to **77**.
The elm door?	Turn to **68**.

190
'Are you sure you wish to take such a creature of evil with you?' asks the Healer. The pegasus stomps its hooves in apparent agreement.

'Please,' snaps the Ganjee. 'Without my help this one would still be chained up in Zengis, bleating for his mother. He needs me and he knows it.'

Do you need him? If you wish, you can leave the troublesome spirit with the Healer, who will doubtless find a way to banish him back to his home plane. Decide whether to do so or not and then mount the pegasus by turning to **160**.

191
Down and down into the depths you are dragged. Curiously, you find you can breathe quite normally, no doubt due to the magic of the creature you have snagged. Peering into the watery gloom, you can just make out the shape of the being attached to the line. It seems humanoid, but swims in a bizarre fashion, parting its legs widely, almost like a frog. The creature continues its descent, pulling you though a crevice deep in the river bed. You are now far too deep to dare letting go for fear you would drown before you reach the surface. Ahead, you spot a great bubble. It is to this that the mysterious creature swims. Head-first it parts the bubble and drags you into it, the outer skin admitting you with a squeaky pop. Within the bubble is a most amazing sight. Built into the spires of rock that form the river bottom are a great many circular homes, each with one circular entrance and one circular window. Swimming amongst these strange buildings are goblin-like creatures with large ears and webbed hands and feet. They are clothed in loincloths made of plants and flowers and laugh amongst themselves on seeing you.

'Welcome to the home of the mimsies,' greets one.

Although the bubble is filled with water, the mimsies assure you that you will be able to breathe even without holding on to the fishing rod. Relieved to let go of the thing at last, you swim freely, following the mimsies along the winding streets of their aqauatic city. At last you are led to a great palace made of stone. Great arched windows dominate the audience chamber where a large overweight mimsy sits on a throne of shells taken from the sea. A coral crown rests upon his head. ‘Welcome human,’ he says. ‘We are always happy to have one of your kind amongst us.’

‘I thank you for your hospitality, you reply. ‘But I fear I cannot stay. I have an important mission to undertake on the surface world.’

The mimsy king laughs, bubbles escaping from his mouth. ‘You cannot leave, you are our honoured guest! You must stay and keep us entertained. You will find life to be much better under the water. And anyway,’ he adds with a wide smirk, ‘you would find it quite impossible to reach the surface again without our help.’

The mimsies cheer at this pronouncement while you look aghast. If Sussurus is with you, turn to **213**. Otherwise, turn to **226**.

192

A bone-chilling wail rings out and the demon dissolves before your eyes, leaving only a black orb lying on the stone floor. Stooping over, you pick it up and find it to be warm and surprisingly heavy. You may store this in your backpack or leave it here. With nothing else of interest in the room, you head back to the previous chamber. Turn to **153**.

193

Despite your hurry, you remember Sussurus’ warning about the fire trap and are careful to step only on every other step on your way down.

‘There’s nowhere to run down there, fool!’ laughs Fang-Zen as you reach the foot of the stairs. You turn to see the mercenary at the top of the stairs, looking down at you with an altogether unwholesome grin. Turn to **23**.

194

Back on the streets, you and Tynar quickly duck down an alleyway, eager to escape the attention of any beggars who might be about. Once you have covered enough distance, the priest turns to you and rests a hand on your shoulder. ‘Good luck, my friend. I am glad I was able to help you get the spirit back. I only hope that he was worth it!’

‘Worth it?!’ screeches Sussurus. ‘I am worth all the treasures of the earth, mortal! While you are not worth the leavings of a lame donkey.’

‘Whatever. Well, good luck on your quest. Allansia itself depends on you.’

With that, the priest heads back to his home, leaving you to make your way to the market.

‘Where did you dig up that waste of skin?’ grumbles Sussurus.

‘Oh, shut up.’

Turn to **39**.

195

The mist solidifies, taking the form of a bearded man with a hooked nose dressed in long robes. ‘Greetings, one who set forth to rid my great niece of her birth-right. I am Arcturus.’

‘Arcturus,’ you breathe, remembering Sussurus telling you that he was the last inhabitant of Vatos to possess the key.

‘Do not be afeared,’ he says. ‘I have no wish to see Leesha or anyone else gain control of the Juggernaut. She is petulant, indolent and foolish, just like her grandmother always was. Vatos has been ruled too long by ineffectual high priestesses; it no longer deserves its former glory. Better let it continue to sink into ruin and be remembered for its glorious past than its pathetic present.’

‘Can you aid me in stopping the reawakening of the Juggernaut?’

‘Indeed I can. It lurks in the catacombs below. The way down is guarded. I shall send you there by a safer and quicker route.’

The spirit of Arcturus claps his spectral hands together and there is a blinding flash...

When the light fades, you are standing in a stone hallway, passageways leading off into the darkness in every direction. The floor is covered in a green slime that clings to your boots. Turn to **108**.

196

Between the two of you, you make short work of the felinaur, who crumbles to the ground with a dying mew.

‘My thanks, friend,’ begins the centaur. Then he spots Sussurus hanging at your belt and his eyes narrow. ‘What manner of creature is that?’ he demands.

‘Why, I’m a Ganjee,’ replies Sussurus. ‘An unrelenting spirit of arcane evil who delights in turning milk sour and swiping babies. And you are?’

The centaur’s brows knit in fury. ‘Servants of evil!’ he cries. ‘You shall die this day!’

Sparing the bothersome Ganjee a dark look, you prepare to fight the enraged centaur. Luckily he was badly wounded in his fight with the felinaur.

CENTAUR SKILL 9 STAMINA 5

If you win, turn to **185**.

197

The corridor ends in a stone archway covered with a black curtain. A skull is carved into the great stone block at the top of its archway, its eyeless gaze filling you with dread.

‘I must say,’ says Sussurus, ‘whoever did the interior decorating in this place certainly knew what he was doing. Top class.’

Ignoring him, you throw back the curtain to a small antechamber, another arch in the far wall. Resting his back against one side of the arch, both heads bickering with one another, is a Calacorm, a two-headed lizard-like humanoid not known for its intelligence. It grips a club in its right hand. ‘Looks like we have company, mutters one head. The other turns to you. ‘So we do.’

The Calacorm blocks the way ahead, free hand raised to halt you. ‘You may not pass, human. Orders of High Priestess Leesha.’

‘Oh, so you’re taking orders from Leesha now?’ says the other head. ‘Here’s me thinking we served only Lady Lucretia.’

‘Yeah, well, her Ladyship said we should obey the High Priestess ‘til she tells us otherwise. Ergo, I’m going to obey Leesha’s command not to let anyone pass.’

‘Ergo? Since when did you know words like “ergo”?’

‘I’ve been reading,’ says the left head triumphantly.

‘Reading of all things? By the gods, if Mum could see you now.’

‘What do you mean? Mum always liked me better.’

‘Her left head liked you better. Her right head was the one that was screwed on right.’

‘Um, excuse me, gentlemen,’ you interrupt. ’Any chance you’d consider letting me pass?’

‘No!’ the heads say in unison.

Perhaps you could make it worth the creature’s while? If you have them, you could offer the Calacorm a shell bracelet (turn to **30**), or an Axe of Hacking (turn to **165**)? If you have neither, or do not wish to offer them to the Calacorm, you must attack! Turn to **112**.

198

Sword pointed forwards, you stoop low, ready for the rhino-man’s inevitable charge. And completely unready for being suddenly seized from behind, a knife pressed to your throat! ‘Sorry, friend,’ snarls the moustached man, his mouth close to your ear. ‘Not exactly the most honourable way of catching your prey, but when your prey is a tiger such as yourself, you can understand us resorting to such base tactics.’ He looks to the rhino-man. ‘Brus. If you’d be so kind.’

With an unwholesome smile, Brus the rhino-man brings the butt of his halberd down hard on your forehead. Everything goes black...

...Voices. Indistinct. Chains binding wrists and ankles. Food forced into your mouth. Blackness...

...Voices. Female...

‘You’re sure this is the one?’

‘Positive. I’d never forget that face. Not after all the tragedy this one has brought me.’

‘And we can’t just kill the fool and be done with it?’ This voice is huskier than the other, its accent unusual.

‘No, you cannot.’ This voice is male; a deep, rumbling baritone. ‘The key can only be transferred via killing by honourable combat. So it was with Dire. So it was with Darkstorm. And so it was with your uncle.’

‘What would you suggest then?’ asks the softer voice. You can’t help but feel you’ve heard it before. You force an eye open, but can only make out blurred shapes.

‘Remove the hand. And keep its owner alive at all costs.’

Blackness...

PAIN! Your left wrist being sawed through in horrifying agony. A scream rings out; the first noise you have made in days. Then stinging relief, a cooling sensation on the bloody stump where once was your hand. Oblivion washes over...

...Voices.

‘The key is still intact?’ the husky voice asks.

‘Yes, it still resides within the hand. The Juggernaut is ours to command.’

‘Then why tarry here any longer? We should return to Vatos.’

‘Indeed. Fang-Zen!’

‘Yes, Mistress?’

‘You and Brus will watch our friend here. We will return from Vatos in two weeks’ time, by which time I will be fully capable of defeating this fool and taking the key for myself. In the meantime: keep him alive.’

Footsteps.

‘What of me?’ cries the baritone.

A snicker. ‘You will remain here. In your bottle. As penance for letting this one through in the first place.’

‘Stupid woman! You cannot do this to me! I am an immortal.’

‘An immortal trapped in a bottle until I say otherwise. Farewell.’

Blackness...

Days of feeding. Vomiting. Treatment. Vision returns every now and again. You are chained to a stone wall in a square, crudely-furnished basement. Brus the rhino-man stands like a statue, only moving to feed you or himself or to answer nature’s call. The moustached man, Fang-Zen you assume, paces back and forth impatiently. Strangest of all, upon a wooden table is a stoppered glass bottle containing a ghostly white face: a Ganjee! These are your silent companions during your ordeal; an ordeal that robs 1 point from your *Initial* SKILL score and 3 points from your current STAMINA score.

‘Human! Wake up!’

You open your eyes revealing the room empty apart from the glowering Ganjee in a bottle. ‘Yes, you,’ the Ganjee snaps. ‘This is your chance to escape. The Khulian has left to frequent the city’s gambling halls leaving that moronic rhino-man to watch over you. Said moron is outside, relieving himself as we speak. When he returns, play along and you can get out of here.’

‘My... hand,’ you gasp. ‘They took... my hand.’

'Yes, yes, boo-hoo, they took your hand. I'll tell you why just as soon as you take care of the delightful Brus. Here he comes. Laugh!'

The Ganjee bursts into uproarious laughter as the rhino-man pushes open the door into the room. You join in the laughter, acting almost hysterical at some imaginary joke.

'What so funny?' grunts Brus suspiciously.

'Why, my dear fellow, you are!' replies the Ganjee amongst peals of laughter. 'We were just saying how even one-handed this human could tan your hide with the greatest of ease.'

'Oh yeah?' Brus growl, eyeing you up.

'Of course. But of course we could never find out. If you were to release him, he'd defeat you in a matter of seconds and escape into the streets.'

'Huh. I'll thrash him and the chain him up again afterwards. The mistress just said I had to keep him alive. She never said I couldn't give him a good thrashing.'

'By all means, give it a try,' you taunt, strength surging once more to your limbs at the prospect of being freed.

Grunting, the rhino-man turns a handle built into the wall, loosening your chains. Shakily you step forward. You have little time to find your feet however, as Brus comes charging towards you, halberd swinging. As you are unarmed you must subtract 1 from your Attack Strength in this battle and all others until you find a weapon.

BRUS SKILL 6 STAMINA 6

If you win, turn to **96**.

199

'What the hell is that?!' you cry, pointing behind the beggars. All three turn in alarm and you race away from them, pounding along the cobbled street, dodging amused passers-by.

'After 'im, lads,' screams one beggar and you know the chase is on. The lane joins an alleyway which runs left and right. Will you dash left (turn to **174**), or right (turn to **98**)?

200

You cough loudly. The man sits up with a jolt, eyes wide at the thought of being caught napping on his mistress' couch. He looks at you uncertainly. If you are wearing a black talisman, turn to **124**. Otherwise, turn to **19**.

201

Although the princess is obviously a better swimmer than you are, her terror at being caught causes her to thrash too much and you manage to catch up with her just as the trident-armed mimsies are nearly upon you. Seeing you seize the girl once more they back off again, eyeing you nervously. You press the sharp stone against her throat and tell her that the next time she tries something like that you will not be so merciful. Realising she had best start obeying you, she swims with you towards the bubble's casing, the mimsy soldiers watching on in horror, but making no move to stop you. The two of you burst through the bubble, the great weight of the river waters once more felt. But with the princess clutched tightly against you, you find you can breathe just fine. Kicking your legs in unison, you soon reach the surface and burst through. You gulp down lungfuls of air gratefully, surprised how much you missed the substance in your aquatic sojourn. You let go of the princess, who swims away from you before turning to watch you coyly.

'Sorry about that,' you say. 'I hope you can forgive me.'

Surprisingly, the girl smiles. 'Are you kidding? I was scared at first, but you were true to your word and didn't hurt me. And what's more, I'm going to be spoilt no end after this! Daddy never lets me leave the bubble normally. I think I might explore the world downriver before heading home.'

She takes a bracelet made of shells from her wrist and tosses it towards you. You snatch it and place it on your own arm. 'Farewell, man-thing,' she says, then dives underwater. Deciding it best to get back on dry land in case the mimsies come after you, you clamber onto the grassy bank and head once more to the Moonstone Hills. Turn to **136**.

202

You give a blast of the horn. The sound reverberates, matching the pitch of the howling wind. The wind increases in intensity, and you are forced to press your back against the stone wall to prevent yourself being swept away. The Wheelies are not so lucky. Their disc-shaped bodies are easily snatched up by the wind and they are carried upwards, their wailing inaudible as they rush past you to disappear into the darkness above. The wind soon dies down, but no more sign of the Wheelies is seen. Pleased with how you dealt with the nuisance, you hurry on down the ramp. It spirals downwards for several yards until it at last ends at a stone floor, its surface covered with a greenish slime. Turn to **108**.

203

With no way to protect your face, the sand buffets your eyes, nostril and mouth relentlessly, the wind reaching almost gale-force proportions. Lose 1 STAMINA point. You veer off from your path, hoping to escape the brunt of the wind. Slightly more comfortable, you trudge on, hoping you can head back in the direction of Vatos once the wind subsides a bit. However, just as you crest a dune, something grabs your leg. Bursting from the sand, its face mostly obscured by the whirling maelstrom, is a lizard-like creature with a gaping maw lined with jagged teeth. A pair of rubbery tentacles grow from scaly shoulders and one of them is wrapped tightly around your leg. The Sand Snapper gives a high-pitched screech as it hauls you closer to its cavernous mouth and the certain death that awaits there.

FIRST TENTACLE SKILL 7 STAMINA 7
SECOND TENTACLE SKILL 7 STAMINA 7

Fight the tentacles one at a time. If either of them ever wins two consecutive attack rounds, turn immediately to **47**. If you manage to sever both tentacles, the crippled Sand Snapper gives a screech of rage that is all but lost over the howl of the storm and retreats once more into the sand. You hurry on from this place. Not long after, the storm at last subsides, leaving you free to head once more in the direction of Vatos. Turn to **54**.

204

You grab the lid's edge and heave, bicep bulging, tendons straining, but you're just not strong enough to budge it, especially with only one arm. If you possess a Potion of Might, turn to **101**. If not, there is nothing you can do to open the sarcophagus. Disappointed, you head back to the previous chamber. Turn to **153**.

205

'I probably should have told you,' says Sussurus as another arrow comes screaming over your head. 'Daneth-El is sacred to the Wood Elves and they have vowed to kill any trespassers.'

'Yes, you definitely should have told me!' you cry as another arrow bounces off the pillar. Clearly you cannot stay here; it is only a matter of time before the archers get behind you, and then you will be a sitting duck. Will you stand with arms raised in surrender and hope the elven folk take pity on you (turn to **31**), or will you dash out from behind your hiding-place and run the gauntlet to the city square and the safety of the teleporter (turn to **183**)?

206

Between the two of you, you easily overpower the centaur, the enraged felinaur finishing him with a vicious swipe of her blade across his throat. The creature then turns to you, blonde curls hanging over large emerald eyes. She nods at you and then at the centaur's body before racing off northwards, plunging amongst the trees. Will you follow her? If so, turn to **123**. If you would rather not, turn to **185**.

207

The great bird spreads its wings wide, talons extended, its sheer size much greater than you first realised. Before you can muster any sort of defence, it seizes you in its claws before taking wing once more. Soon you hang suspended perilously over the Moonstone Hills, the beating of the Roc's wings almost deafening. If you have a sword or axe, you could try attacking the beast's soft underbelly as it carries you onward. If you wish to try this, turn to **88**. If you do not wish to, or lack the necessary weapon to do so, turn to **60**.

208

The brawl has gathered quite a few onlookers, and it isn't long before a patrol of watchmen come barging through. 'That's enough,' cries the leader. 'You're all under arrest.'

You are seized by several watchmen and dragged away. The crowd of onlookers disperses, muttering about how the watch always spoils the fun. Turn to **170**.

209

'Oh, spare us your false displays of charity,' spits Sussurus. 'You do-gooders are all the same; go out of your way to help others so you can sleep at night with a smug self-satisfied smirk upon your face.'

'I assure you my concern for my friend is genuine, Ganjee,' says Tynar. 'But I wouldn't expect a creature of pure malevolence like yourself to understand such a concept.' The priest then turns to you. 'Are you sure you wish to travel with this evil being? It is only a matter of time before he betrays you. If you leave him with me, I may be able to find a way to banish him back to the nether planes that spawned him.'

'Hmmph,' says Sussurus.

It's a tempting suggestion. Will you leave the foul-tempered Ganjee with Tyrnar? If so, turn to **27**. If you would rather hang on to him, turn to **73**.

210

A few inquiries with passers-by confirm your fears; the beggars stole Sussurus from you while you were lying dazed. You head back to the lane hoping to spot them, but they have vanished into the warren of back alleys that make up this part of the city. You are about to give up any hope when an idea comes to you. Tynar, a warrior-priest and a former adventuring comrade of yours, had chosen to spend his retirement from life on the road in this very city. You had completely forgotten this until now else you would have asked him for aid rather than sat begging for hours. You head to the Temple of Telak to find out if the clergy there can point you towards his current abode.

Sure enough, an age-ravaged priest is able to point you in the right direction and, mere minutes later, you find yourself knocking on your old friend's green-painted door. Tynar opens the door, a smile creasing his face as he sees you. Your former comrade-in-arms is beginning to show his age, deep furrows crossing his brow, but he still has the same sparkling blue eyes. 'What brings you to these parts, my friend?' he asks. Then he notices your missing hand and a look of concern replaces that of geniality. 'I think you had best come in. You look like you have much to tell me.'

Tynar shows you into his spartan, but cosy, drawing room and you gratefully warm your hand by its roaring fire. The priest pours you a drink of brandy which you drink down readily (restore 4 STAMINA points).

'Now, what brings you to Zengis?' Tynar asks. 'I assume it is not a mere visit to your old friend?'

You relate the tale of how your hand was taken, of Lucretia and Leesha's wicked plans and of how your one ally was stolen by the beggars. Tynar strokes his chin thoughtfully. 'He'll be with the Beggar King now, mark my words. He holds court over the other delinquents in a disused theatre near the docks and anything of significant value is brought to him there.'

'Then there we must go!'

The priest shakes his head. 'They will not surrender such a prize as this Ganjee easily. Do you really desire his company so badly? He is an evil spirit don't forget, and I wager he will bring you more sorrow than good.'

If you are determined to get Sussurus back from the beggars, turn to **65**. Otherwise, you thank Tynar for his advice and hospitality and head for the market square, eager to continue your quest. Turn to **39**.

211

The gap in the machine's armour is directly in front of you, just agonizingly beyond your reach. You can see the gears that power it churning inside, the noise almost overpowering. If you possess a black orb, turn to **218**. If not, but you have the Javelin of Vatos, turn to **59**. If you have neither object in your possession, turn to **154**.

212

Quickly, you duck down the manhole and clamber down the rungs to the sewer's bottom. You find yourself wading in foul-smelling brownish water coming up to your ankles.

'It's at times like these I'm glad I can't smell anything through this bottle,' remarks Sussurus wryly.

Indeed. Conscious that the beggars may have noticed your escape into the sewers, you decide to hurry on. Stone archways lead to the left and right. Which will you choose?

Left?	Turn to **20**.
Right?	Turn to **79**.

213

'Wonderful,' remarks the Ganjee. 'You've managed to get us captured by some in-bred fish people just because your do-gooding heart can't resist helping every pathetic lifeform you pass.'

The mimsy king seems intrigued by Sussurus and strokes his blubbery chin with webbed fingers. 'I have never seen a talking spirit like this before! You wish to trade?'

'Trade for what?' you say, uncertainly. If you are their prisoner, why don't they just take the Ganjee off you? Maybe they truly think of you as a welcome guest rather than a reluctant detainee.

'Anything! Anything! Perhaps an escort back to the surface world?' The king's gimlet eyes fix on you; clearly he is quite aware that you are powerless to leave without his help.

'Won't you miss my delightful company?' you ask.

'But of course. But your spirit there should keep us entertained in your absence.'

'You can't leave me with these inbred cretins!' cries Sussurus. 'We'll find a way to escape. An unbeatable team: you and I!'

The king continues to smile at you, his subjects similarly cheerful. Will you surrender Sussurus to them (turn to **83**), or refuse the king's offer (turn to **4**)?

214

Lucretia stands with slender arms folded, expression devoid of all humour. 'You whelp,' she sneers. 'You think you can challenge me without your sorcery? At least once I've destroyed you, I can dispense with all this severed hand nonsense. Die!'

Her green eyes turn red and a jet of flames shoots forth from them. You quickly dodge to one side, the ground where you were just standing erupting into flame.

If you possess a ring of fire resistance, turn to **63**. If not, but you have an enchanted amulet, turn to **75**. If you own neither however, turn to **150**.

215

An arrow comes flying at you from behind a crumbling church wall, its point drawing a speck of blood as it whizzes past your ear. You throw yourself behind a fallen pillar just as two more arrows whiz from elsewhere in the ruins, bouncing off the stonework. Turn to **205**.

216

Without a word, the elf lets fly with his arrow. Several more come rushing from the ruins, each finding its mark. Looking more like a porcupine than a man, you fall to the ground, stone dead.

217

You fall to your side, the jet of flame sailing over you. Lucretia curses as you scramble to your feet, closing the distance between you before she can fire again. Turn to **163**.

218

You suddenly feel an alarming heat from your backpack. Brows furrowed, you root about in your backpack and pull out the orb. It is so hot that it almost hurts to touch. Inspiration striking, you hurl the orb into the cavity in the Juggernaut's armour. There is a small explosion, gears sent flying. The Juggernaut immediately stops dead, the light in its eyes failing. Above, you hear Sussurus cursing. With a grim smile, you clamber up the Juggernaut's jagged body towards him. Turn to **92**.

219

Inspiration striking, you pull the horn from your back pack and give it an almighty blow. A rushing whirlwind of air burst forth, the smoke demon caught in its onslaught. The wind gets more violent, scattering the smoke all over the room until at last the creature dissipates with a primordial scream, the flames in the braziers snuffed out. When the wind subsides, there is nothing left of the demon but a black orb sitting on the stone floor. Picking it up, you find it surprisingly heavy and warm to the touch. Choose whether you wish to take this with you or not before returning to the previous chamber by turning to **153**.

220

Luckily there is still a fair bit of water in the flask. You drink it sparingly as you travel on, fully aware that it is all that stands between life and death for you. Turn to **231**.

221

The beggar snatches the gold from you without even a thank you and then the three of them waddle away.

'Well, that was a complete waste of time,' remarks Sussurus. 'So what's your next hare-brained money-making scheme then?'

You are about to retort when an idea strikes you. An old adventuring friend, a warrior-priest by the name of Tynar lives in Zengis these days. You had quite forgotten until now. He is sure to help you out in your hour of need, especially when there is evil to be foiled. Your spirits lifted by this thought, you head to the Temple of Telak to ask of Tynar's whereabouts. An aged priest with a face so lined it looks cracked directs you to your old friend's home which is but five minutes' walk from here. You follow his directions to the wealthy parts of the city, the hovels of the city centre replaced by well-appointed two-storey homes. You knock on the green-painted door of one such home and burst into a smile as Tynar opens the door. Your old comrade-in-arms is beginning to show his age, deep furrows crossing his brow. 'What brings you to these parts, my friend?' he asks. Then he notices your missing hand and the Ganjee hanging on your belt and a look of concern replaces that of geniality. 'I think you had best come in. You look like you have much to tell me.'

Turn to **84.**

222

Just in time, your flailing arm grabs hold of the lip of the ramp, your body dangling precariously over the abyss. You look up to see Dire standing over you, laughing triumphantly. 'Farewell, peasant. Sorry to leave you hanging.'

He disappears. As he does so, you think you can hear squeaky voices from far below: 'That sounded like the boss!'

'He's come back to punish us for not protecting him before!'

'Run!'

Unconcerned with these creatures' fretting, you strain with all your might, the veins on your good arm bulging as you succeed in swinging one leg onto the lip of the ramp. The other leg soon follows and you roll towards the wall, breathing heavily. Once you have sufficiently recovered from your near death experience, you stagger to your feet, following the ramp downward as it winds along the edge of the shaft. There is no sign of the mysterious beings you heard talking and you can only assume that they did indeed flee. At last, you arrive at a stone floor at the ramp's end. The floor is covered in a disgusting green slime that clings to your boots. Turn to 108.

223

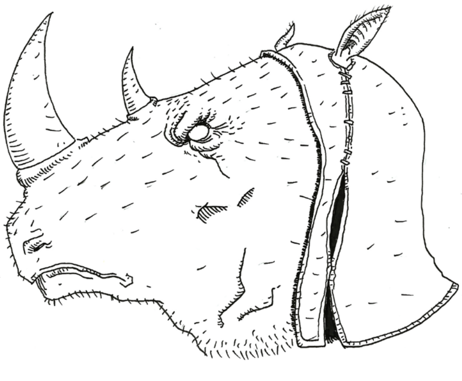
You barge through the ragged beggars, ignoring their curses as you shove them aside. 'That spirit is my property,' you yell up at the king. 'I demand you hand him over at once.'

The king sneers, his lordly manner ill-fitting with his lowly station. 'Seize this impudent oaf!' he commands.

You are grabbed by dozens of grimy hands. The beggars tie your feet to a rope hanging from the ceiling. 'Haul him up! Haul him up!' comes the chant. A grinning tramp hauls on another rope and you are carried up into the air feet first, blood rushing to your head, arms dangling limply. You see Tynar rushing to your aid, but other beggars seize him by the arms, jeering as they hold him back. The beggars grab large sticks and begin to bat you about the theatre, sending you swinging back and forth. You begin to feel very, very sick. Roll 4 dice. If you roll greater than your STAMINA, turn to **110**. If you roll less than or equal, turn to **179**.

224

Reaching the iron door, you heave it open, entering a small room with a high ceiling. The fading sunlight spills forth through some high-arched windows in the far wall and you shiver at the dipping temperature. A circular pit lies in the room's middle. Curious, you walk towards the pit and peer down. As you do, there is a click followed by a grinding noise. A circular lift rises to the top of the pit, settling with a clunk. With some trepidation, you step on it and it immediately sinks into the darkness. After what seems like hours, but is in reality only seconds, the lift hits the bottom and you step through an archway in the shaft to a cavernous room. Stone-clad walls stretch into the darkness and icy chills seep forth from two archways in either side of the room. Will you take the archway on your left (turn to **130**), or the right (turn to **7**)?



225

After hearing all the evidence against you, the magistrate turns his rheumy-eyed gaze to you and clears his throat. 'Although you acted outside the law,' he intones, 'due to your impeccable past deeds; the vouching of the highly respected Tynar; and the desperate circumstances you have been placed in, I find I must be merciful. Your punishment shall take the form of the imprisonment you have already served and the confiscation of all money in your possession. The decision of the court is final.' A thump on his desk with his gavel brings your case to a close. Your two guards escort you back to the jail where your backpack and its contents are returned to you. However all your gold is lost, as is Sussurus. When you try asking your jailer about returning the Ganjee to you, he merely laughs.

'We can't have convicts like you running about with magical beings. That spirit is city property now.'

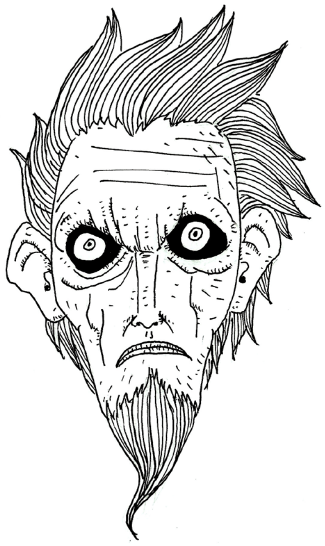
Somewhat peeved, you are escorted to the exit, where you are told to clear off. You head down the stone steps of the court house towards Tynar, who awaits you at the bottom. 'I had not expected to meet you again in such circumstances,' says the priest. 'Come, let us head to my home. I feel there is much you need to tell me.'

He leads you to his home in the well-to-do part of Zengis. Turn to **84**.

226

The mimsies spend the next hour asking you to do capers for them, laughing in uproarious bubbles as you do clumsy acrobatics underwater for their amusement. The king's daughter sits by his throne, bulbous eyes wide in delight at your humiliation. Eventually, they begin to tire of you and one by one the subjects float away. At last, the king too retires to his chamber and the others soon disperse, leaving you to swim about the aquatic city as you please.

The city is marvellous, treasures hoarded from the river and the oceans beyond decorating every one of the spherical homes you peer into. Most curious of all is a large squat building with two chimneys pumping out red and purple smoke that mingles with the waters of the great bubble, dispersing with a sweet smelling aroma. Various mimsies come out of the circular doorway of this building, clutching glass vials of green and purple potions. Sometimes they drink these potions, other times they spread them on their shoulders before swimming out of the bubble. Wondering if perhaps this building may contain some solution to escaping this place you swim towards it. As you make your way there, you spot a figure watching you from the shadows. Moving closer, you recognise the bulbous eyes of the mimsy princess. A thought occurs to you. If you were to take her hostage, you could perhaps force her to take you back to the surface. If you want to try this, turn to **182**. Otherwise, you head on to the strange laboratory. Turn to **22**.



227

'I guess I should probably point you in the right direction for Vatos,' sighs Sussurus. 'Much as I enjoy seeing your feeble struggles through the sun, it wouldn't do to have you collapsing a desiccated husk, would it?'

'You know where it lies?'

'Of course. I know all there is to know about Titan.'

'Then why didn't you say so before?!'

'I believe I just said I enjoy watching your feeble struggling. What part of that don't you understand?'

The Ganjee proceeds to tell you what way to face to reach Vatos. The horizon he points you toward is as blank and featureless as every other direction, but you're in no position to argue. You stride onward, hoping that Sussurus' indulgence in your torment will not ultimately end up costing you your life.

An hour of walking later, the wind begins to pick up, flecks of sand rising to sting your eyes. It seems a sandstorm is starting up. If you have a cloak, turn to **10**. Otherwise, turn to **203**.

228

'Alright,' you release the princess and shove her towards the mimsies. A female mimsy takes the child and drags her to safety. The mimsy who commanded you to hand her over flashes you a toothy grin.

'Kill him.'

The mimsies are much better at fighting underwater than you and you are hopelessly outnumbered. The fight does not last long.

229

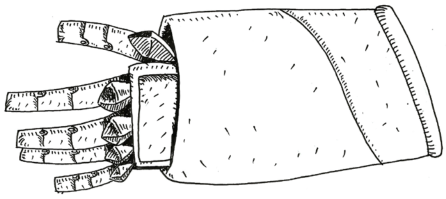
Leesha's eyes grow wide at the sight of the oddly-made sword. 'No,' she breathes. 'Sandworm tooth.'

You unsling the sword from your back and she backs away, fearful eyes flashing to the wall to her left where no doubt a secret door is concealed. Determined not to let her escape so easily, you back her into a corner.

'Curse you!' she cries. 'I will show you how savagely one of noble blood can fight!' She raises her sickle and swings it at your face.

LEESHA SKILL 7 STAMINA 7

If you reduce her to 1 STAMINA point, turn immediately to **121**.



230

Luckily, no more guards show up, leaving you free to pilfer a potion. Remembering that you saw the mimsies outside consuming green and purple potions, you decide one of these is most likely to help you survive outside the bubble. Will you try a green potion (turn to **164**), or a purple potion (turn to **6**)?

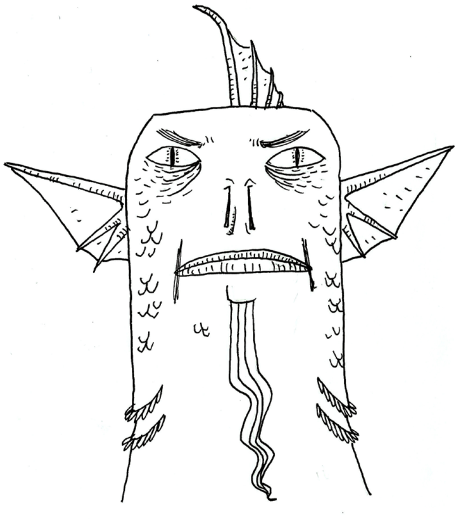
231

Just when you feel you cannot take another step, a shape becomes visible through the constant haze of heat. You walk on, tongue lolling like a dog's. As you move closer, the shape becomes more distinct, taking the appearance of a great walled city of stone, flat-topped buildings and spiked minarets peeking over the high wall.

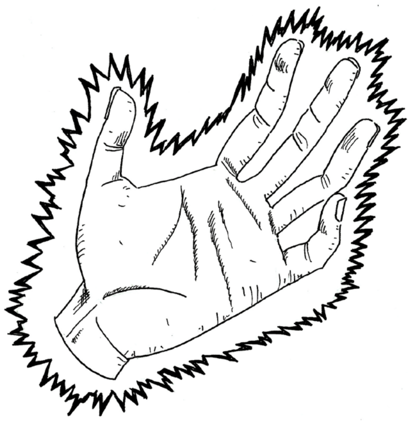
'Vatos!' you breathe.

'You don't say,' remarks Sussurus. 'Wait, where are you going?' he snaps as you head towards the entrance gate. 'The main streets and corridors of Vatos are swarming with monsters. There is a secret way into the temple itself that the High Priestess' servants would avail of.'

He directs you to a sand-covered mound directly behind the city. Sure enough, there is a door made of oak leading into the mound. You try the brass handle, but the door is locked. A good booting soon brings it open, however, and you step into a refreshingly cool chamber, torches set in brackets in the stone wall illuminating a set of stone steps leading down. A stone font is filled with water, and you drink deeply from it until you feel like you could



burst. Taking a moment to savour being out of the searing heat of the desert, you then set off down the steps. They take you far underground until you arrive at a stone corridor heading onwards. Its walls are decorated with hieroglyphics depicting hideous torture and obscene gods and goddesses. Not keen to pay too much attention to these, you hurry along the corridor. About half-way along, you come to an iron door to your right. Will you open the door (turn to **11**), or pass on and continue along the corridor (turn to **91**)?



232

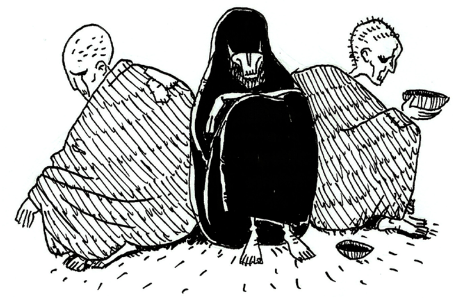
The pain spreads to your shoulder, your whole right arm hanging useless, yet the pain still raging through the paralysis. Falling to your knees, the agony now raging through the rest of your body, saliva dripping from your slack mouth, you gaze down at the piece of paper lying on the floor, tear-stained eyes barely able to read the flowing script inscribed upon it.

My Dear Lucretia

I hope you enjoyed this present I left you. By now I'm sure the pain is almost unbearable. The venom of the Cobalt Asp is the most lethal in all of Titan. The paralysis that is now spreading along your arm will soon fill your whole body. Your heart will be the last thing to go and then, my dear, you shall be no more. I am sorry that our relationship had to be this way, but the High Priestess of Vatos cannot share her birthright with an upstart like yourself. Don't worry though; you have left Allansia in safe hands.

Leesha, High Priestess of Vatos

With your last breath, you curse the scheming priestess and the set of circumstances that led her to bring about your death from beyond the grave. Then you fall to your side, mouth hanging open, dead eyes staring at nothing.



233

With horror, you stare into the flask – it is empty! Overwhelmed by despair, you toss the flask away with a sigh. You know now that unless you reach Vatos soon, you will almost certainly die of thirst. After about half an hour of trudging under the blazing sun, your throat aches with thirst and your limbs are growing weak. Perhaps you have something else you could drink? If you have a red potion and wish to drink that, turn to **64**. If not, but you have a blue potion and wish to try drinking from that, turn to **3**. If you have neither, or would rather not drink of them, there is nothing for it but to grin and bear it. Turn to **21**.

234

You travel for hours, cresting dune after dune with nothing but cacti to look at. The sun beats down mercilessly, and although you try to resist, you find yourself having to drink a fair amount of water as you trudge on. The sands shift relentlessly under your feet, making progress horribly slow. Suddenly, the ground seems to judder, the sand slides downwards, and a great mound rises in the earth. All at once, a great worm bursts forth, its blind face focusing on you, cavernous mouth filled with razor sharp teeth. It is a Giant Sandworm! If you possess an ice crystal, turn to **52**. If not, you will have to battle the most feared predator of the Desert of Skulls.

GIANT
SANDWORM SKILL 10 STAMINA 20

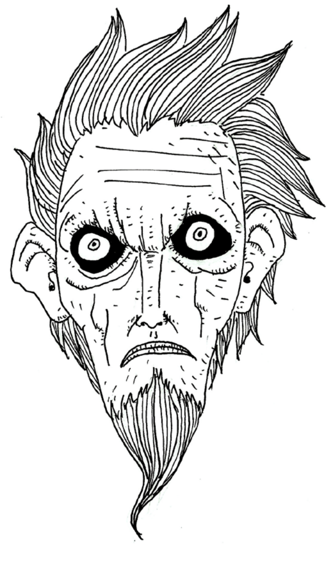
If you reduce the gigantic creature to four Stamina points or less, turn to **132**.

235

Your hand explodes in an eruption of blood and bone, a ball of green light flying from its remains towards the distant opening above. You and Sussurus watch it go.

'Well, well,' tuts the Ganjee. 'It seems the key has nowhere to go now its home has been destroyed by its master. Who knows what will happen to it now?' He sighs. 'I suppose that puts paid to my plans of ruling Allansia. Ah well, you mortals are not worthy of being ruled by one such as I. Well, what can I say? It's been fun, human. If you're ever in the Nether Planes be sure to look me up.'

With that, your travelling companion floats up into the distance, leaving you standing upon the Juggernaut's head, the bloody remnants of your hand before you. At least Allansia will be forever safe from the Juggernaut's wrath now that the key is lost. And maybe if you seek out the Grand Wizard of Yore, he might be able to find a way for you to regain your magical talents. But before that you're going to have to work out one thing: how the heck are you going to get back down from here?!



IAN LIVINGSTONE presents 30

Thirty Years of FIGHTING FANTASY

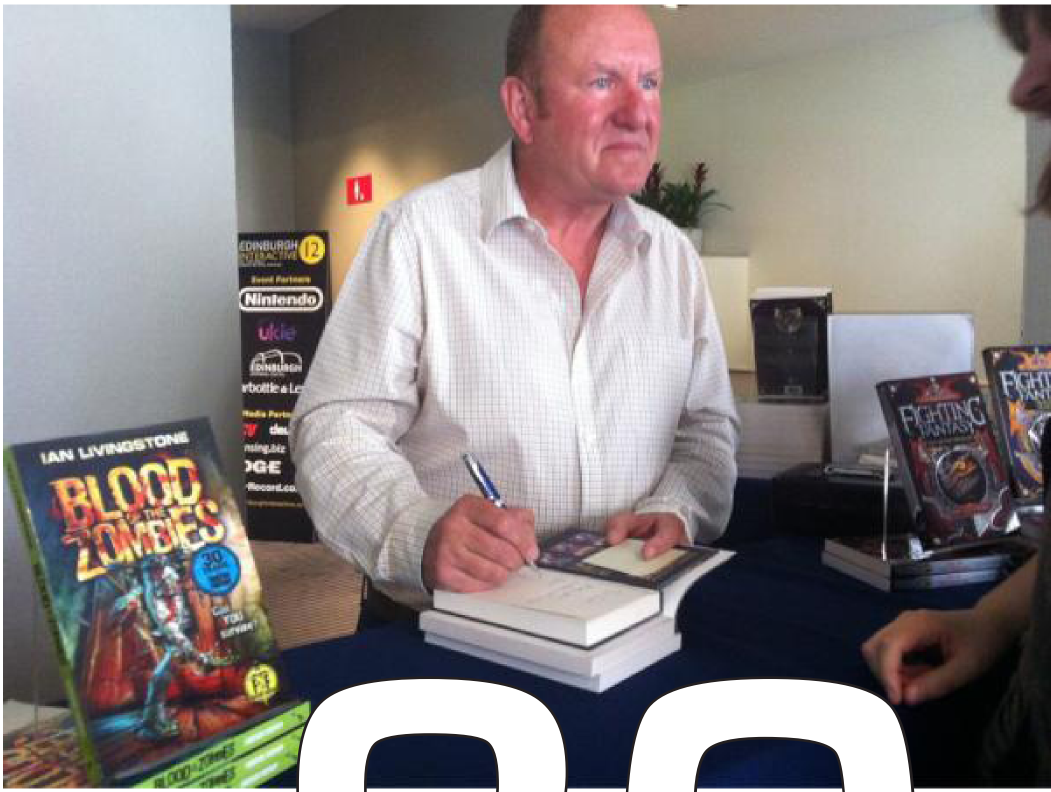


Photo: Alexa Turness © 2012 Used with permission.

***David Walters** attended a talk given by **Ian Livingstone** in Edinburgh in August 2012 for Edinburgh Interactive. What follows is David's summary of the event...*

Ian Livingstone OBE is a busy man, he is currently Life President of Eidos for Square Enix, and recently has been successfully campaigning for tax breaks for the gaming industry and for educational reform of computer science in schools. Ian was in Edinburgh as part of Edinburgh Interactive (an event about interactive media and entertainment), but his busy schedule in the city also included an international book festival appearance and a presentation at an international culture conference at the Scottish Parliament. Despite all this, he has made a point of finding time to mark the 30th anniversary of the release of *Fighting Fantasy* by publishing *Blood of the Zombies*. This book was not written for commercial reasons, but purely to mark the occasions for fans of the series.

When I spoke to Ian before his presentation, I asked about the notable absence of Steve Jackson. Ian admitted he could not get Steve as enthused about writing a 30th anniversary edition, despite stressing to me that *Fighting Fantasy* is (and always will be) dear to Steve's heart. I got the impression that the positive reaction to *Blood of the Zombies* may be something Ian will refer to in order to draw Steve back into the next writing project for *Fighting Fantasy* (more on this later).

At this point Ian walked into a packed conference room to the applause of the assembled audience in order to deliver his presentation on 30 years of *Fighting Fantasy*. No one in the room seemed younger than twenty, with most perhaps in their thirties, and Ian's first words were to comment about how nice it was to have so many young people in the room.

Incidentally, about a quarter of the audience were female, dispelling the myth that *Fighting Fantasy* is only enjoyed by male readers.

How **Fighting Fantasy** Came About

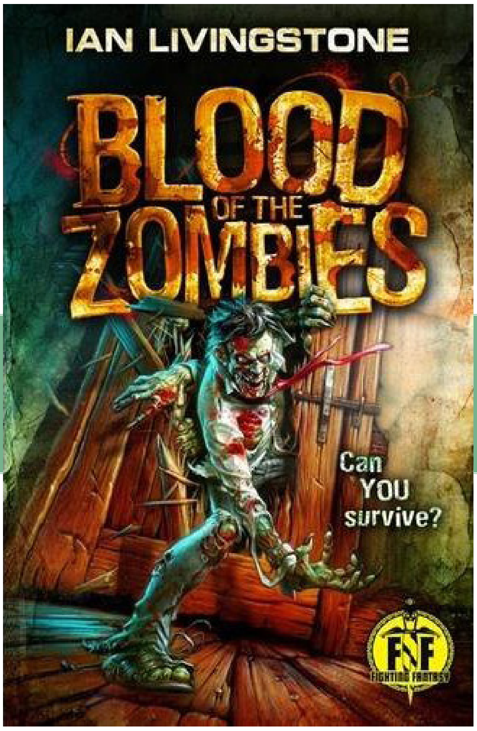
Ian began a slide presentation that ran for the next forty minutes, followed by a question and answer session. He started with a photo of the founders of Games Workshop (Ian, Steve and John Peake) initially selling board games and talked about how they produced a magazine called the *Owl & Weasel*, which in 1975 was sent to everyone they could find who was involved in gaming. One of the recipients of the magazine was Gary Gygax (co-founder of *Dungeons & Dragons*), who responded by offering three-year exclusive distribution rights to sell *Dungeons & Dragons* in Europe.

At first Ian and Steve did not realise how lucrative a deal this was. They lived in a shared flat which used to double as a makeshift shop as well as the headquarters of their mail order service. Other shops resisted the idea of stocking *Dungeon & Dragon* products, not understanding what it was they were being asked to sell. Indeed, the idea of selling role-playing products did not appeal to John Peake who preferred to focus on board games, and parted company with Games Workshop as a result.

Ian and Steve did not have a telephone in their flat and had to use a payphone common to the block as the main number for their business. Others in the block would sometimes get to the phone before Ian and Steve, costing them more than a few customers. Ultimately the success of the business, with people coming in off the street to purchase things and the constant arrival (and storage) of parcels, led to Ian and Steve being kicked out by the landlord.

They were left with a stark choice, somewhat reminiscent of a gamebook choice – did they find somewhere to live, or use the money for a badly needed office to grow their business? They chose the latter option, and lived in Steve's van for four months during the winter whilst they rented office accommodation. Ian points out that this did not feel like a hardship at the time, as they were driven to invest in gaming that they felt passionate about, and describes it as a fun period.

In 1978 they opened the first Games Workshop in Hammersmith, which had a long queue forming outside on its opening day. This ultimately spawned a chain of shops across the UK. Their work for Games Workshop led Ian and Steve to be present at the Gamesday convention in 1980, an event that left Geraldine Cook, of the publisher Penguin Books, amazed by the number of people who seemed passionate about *Dungeons & Dragons*. She was interested in tapping into this market and encouraged Ian and Steve to write something about role-playing.



With their years of gaming and retail experience, Ian and Steve wanted to write a book that involved role-playing, rather than about role-playing. Their first pitch was to another publisher, Allen and Unwin, and was about interactive *Lord of the Rings* based books. This was rejected within two weeks. Ian stressed, in hindsight, just how grateful he was that this was rejected. If it had been accepted, Ian and Steve would have been writing gamebooks about Gandalf on a work-to-hire contract, rather than developing their own creation.

The second pitch Ian and Steve made (*The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*) was accepted by Penguin and published under the Puffin Books brand. Ian and Steve's experience running games workshop meant they insisted on commissioning their own artists for the cover and interior illustrations of the book. This meant that the artwork was a far cry from the 'toadstools and fairies' the publishers were pushing for, and ultimately the artwork was key to the success of the series. The iconic covers were designed to have menacing monsters that looked as if they were challenging the player to fight them.

Once Warlock was released, sales were initially poor for a few weeks until word of mouth began to spread amongst schoolchildren. Such was the consequent level of sales (and the publisher's disbelief in the success of the phenomenon) that Puffin had to reprint the book 10 times in 2 months to satisfy demand. Two more books were quickly commissioned, with Ian and Steve writing one each, and the series began to take shape. *Fighting Fantasy* went on to sell millions of book worldwide with Ian citing the UK, France and Japan as the three areas where *Fighting Fantasy* sold best.

Ian stated he was glad many parents were against *Fighting Fantasy* as it made the brand cooler amongst children and helped with sales. The series is now regarded in a positive light as it is generally accepted that it helps get children to read books, particularly those who find it difficult to get into reading.

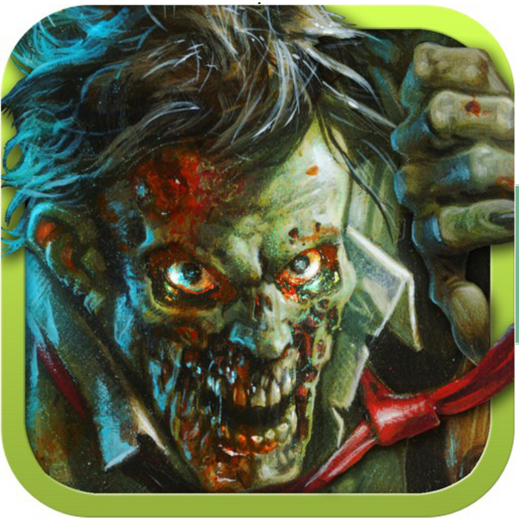
Ian was clear that he does not think there will be a major revival in *Fighting Fantasy*, insistent that today's ten year olds simply have too many distractions. He said that the series 'resonates with ten year olds who are now forty, not ten year olds today,' although in subsequent interviews for the BBC he seemed to have been a bit more convinced that older fans were getting their own children interested in the series.

Blood of the Zombies

It took Ian more than two years to write the new book which he described as 'challenging'. It used to take him a little over two months to write a book in the old days, but then again he was able to work on them up to fifteen hours a day. The new book was clearly a labour of love since the writing of it had to be done late at night when he could squeeze in the time amongst his busy schedule.

He chose the theme of zombies due to the consistent popularity of zombies in culture, and because no other *Fighting Fantasy* book had covered them in any depth. He picked a medieval castle as the setting to straddle the fantasy element he was familiar with writing as well as the real life setting that would allow a variety of modern weapons to be used against the zombies. This book represented something of a risk for him as it was Ian's first book of the series set in the real, modern-day world (his other books being set in the world of Titan with the exception of *Freeway Fighter* which was set in a dystopian future).

Ian insisted that the publisher have a green spine to the book for nostalgia (books previously republished by Wizard did not have green spines). When planning the book he was unsure who he should write for, the child of today or the one who had long since grown up but still loved the books. He found a compromise - he slimmed down the combat rules (dropping SKILL and LUCK) to try to appeal to today's ten year olds, whilst maintain the book as 'stupidly difficult' to appeal to the forty year old reader. He is more than aware that people may just cheat anyway (using 'finger-shaped bookmarks' as he called it), which is another reason for him not to spend too long on the rules.



On the subject of 'stupidly difficult', the second print run of *Blood of the Zombies* changed the rules from an initial 2d6+12 STAMINA to 2d6+20 STAMINA for a starting character. Clearly those who have the first edition of the book are diehard fans who are tougher than any newcomers!

Ian sees the fact that you have to kill all of the zombies to truly win as being like a computer game where all collectibles must be found, which may appeal to younger readers more used to playing games in that way. There are many Easter eggs in the book such as references to Zagor's birthday, a mention of Lara Croft (from Ian's time at Eidos), a mention of the *Owl & Weasel* magazine and much more.

Ian was able to use social media for the first time when creating this book, and this allowed him to find out what people wanted more directly than ever before. More than a thousand people voted online within twenty four hours to choose the name of the book, and more than half a dozen people of Ian's six thousand followers on twitter won a competition to have their names appear in the book. Writer and actor Charlie Higson got his name in the book upon request, as did Member of Parliament Tom Watson – clearly *Fighting Fantasy* still matters to those who have grown up with it whatever their vocation.

The audience was shown several slides of concept art for illustrations in the final book. One of the slides shown was of the original cover art for *Blood of the Zombies*, and compared with the final cover in which the colours had been brightened through Photoshop to maximise the effect. Such technology use in art was not available when the series first started, and was a way in which technology could be used to enhance the final effect. In terms of artwork Ian described himself as a nightmare to work with, being very attentive to detail. When asked if an illustrator read a gamebook before drawing an illustration, he responded that typically an interior illustrator would not. Instead the illustrator would get the background introduction of the book, the paragraph the illustration relates to and in Ian's case copious notes of how it is to look.

Also covered in the presentation was how Tin Man games are producing an app of the book which was due for release in late September (and eventually released in October). It will not just be a straight copy of the book either, containing its own unique content. We were shown a slide of artwork that only appears in black and white in the book, but is beautifully rendered in colour for the app (a zombie holding a grenade). Ian recommended that everyone by the book to place pristinely on their bookshelf for the collection, and then buy the app to play the game on the way to work. Who are we to disagree?

Further *Fighting Fantasy* books are due for release by Tin Man games, with Steve Jackson's *House of Hell* being one to feature soon.

At the time of writing, *Blood of the Zombies* has sold out of print copies within three days and reached as high as 80 in the amazon sales chart – and the digital version is not even out until the end of September. The notoriously tough Eurogamer reviewed the book and gave it 9 out of 10. Ian has been interviewed by BBC news, been on Steve Wright's Radio 2 show, and interviewed by the Guardian about *Fighting Fantasy* and the new book. Clearly Steve Jackson's *Sorcery!* isn't the only thing that still contains the old *Fighting Fantasy* magic.

Audience Questions

The audience were then invited to ask questions, the most interesting of which have been captured below.

SEQUELS TO PREVIOUS **FIGHTING FANTASY** GAMEBOOKS

Would Ian write any sequels?
This was a topic touched on several times by the audience. He advised he would consider a sequel to *Blood of the Zombies* if it really took off.
Would there be another sequel (after *Trial of Champions* and *Armies of Death*) for *Deathtrap Dungeon*?
'Possibly' Ian said, although finding time was difficult.

What about a sequel to *City of Thieves*?
Ian admitted that it would be something he 'might consider'.
How about a sequel to *Legend of Zagor* using the same four-character choice combat system?
Ian ruled this out as complicated, and said the questioner was welcome to write that one themself!

He did state that he is hoping to do a 40th *Fighting Fantasy* anniversary book with Steve Jackson, and if it would be a joint venture it would likely involve Firetop Mountain.

THE TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC OF THE SERIES

Did Ian sense that the 40 year olds of today were getting their kids into *Fighting Fantasy*, thereby bringing it to a new generation?
Ian was certain today's ten year olds had no free time to learn any complicated rules for a gamebook. He felt today's ten year olds would likely respond better to a story with a simple branching narrative and no rules, whereas today's forty year old *Fighting Fantasy* fans wanted and enjoyed more detailed rules. In general Ian did not seem to think that today's ten year olds were getting into *Fighting Fantasy* in any significant way.

Was Ian worried about the content of the books for children?
From his considerable experience in gaming and writing, Ian said he was aware of where to go and where not to go in children's fiction. He said children know the difference between fantasy and reality and as long as the themes are about fantasy elements and not real world problems they will get the distinction.

WRITING GAMEBOOKS

Would Ian consider writing a digital gamebook without an accompanying paperback book with its limitations of format?
Ian admitted he was set in his ways, using pen and paper to create a flowchart for all his gamebooks. He does not foresee this changing.
Which gamebook is Ian most proud of?
Overall Ian chose *Warlock of Firetop Mountain* as it launched the series. He described his joy as a first-time author of seeing his book for sale in bookstores. For the books he wrote solely himself, *Deathtrap Dungeon*, *City of Thieves* and *Blood of the Zombies* are his favourites.

What would Ian have done differently about the books he wrote?
Ian was happy with the books he had written as they were all the best he could do at the time, although he did concede some were naturally better than others.

He also mentioned that the world of Titan was something of an afterthought following the unexpected level of success of *Warlock*, but this was soon resolved in future books to provide a coherent game world.

Is there a sense of competition between Ian and Steve when writing gamebooks individually?
Ian confirmed that there was, but he emphasised it was very much a friendly and healthy competition. In the past both he and Steve did 'keep an eye on' each other's level of sales - a friendly rivalry was good for the series, as they each spent more time perfecting books on the series than they otherwise would have.

Is it harder to write games or gamebooks?
Games were the more challenging, as they involved a team of two hundred people and had to blend ideas with technology. It was easier to make a difference when you are just a team of one.

Does Ian have a rule of thumb when designing the difficulty level of a book?
It is hard to find the right balance of difficulty versus fun. Ian's advice was to simply write the book first, then identify the optimum route through it (the true path that even those with low stats should be able to succeed at), and then make that optimum route fair.

Is it easier to write a novel or a gamebook?
Both are difficult, but he finds a gamebook slightly easier as you can satisfy the reader more easily with rules and monster encounters.

What other books is Ian working on now? Does he have any unfinished gamebooks?
Ian has a gamebook written a while ago that is only ten percent complete, but gave no further details on it.
Ian said he had written a fantasy novel, which an editor was impressed with and just needed a rewrite of the early chapters to set the scene. This was last reviewed in 2008 and he had to set it aside to start work on *Blood of the Zombies*. He had never spoke of the book publicly before that point, and believes it will be published someday in the not too distant future.

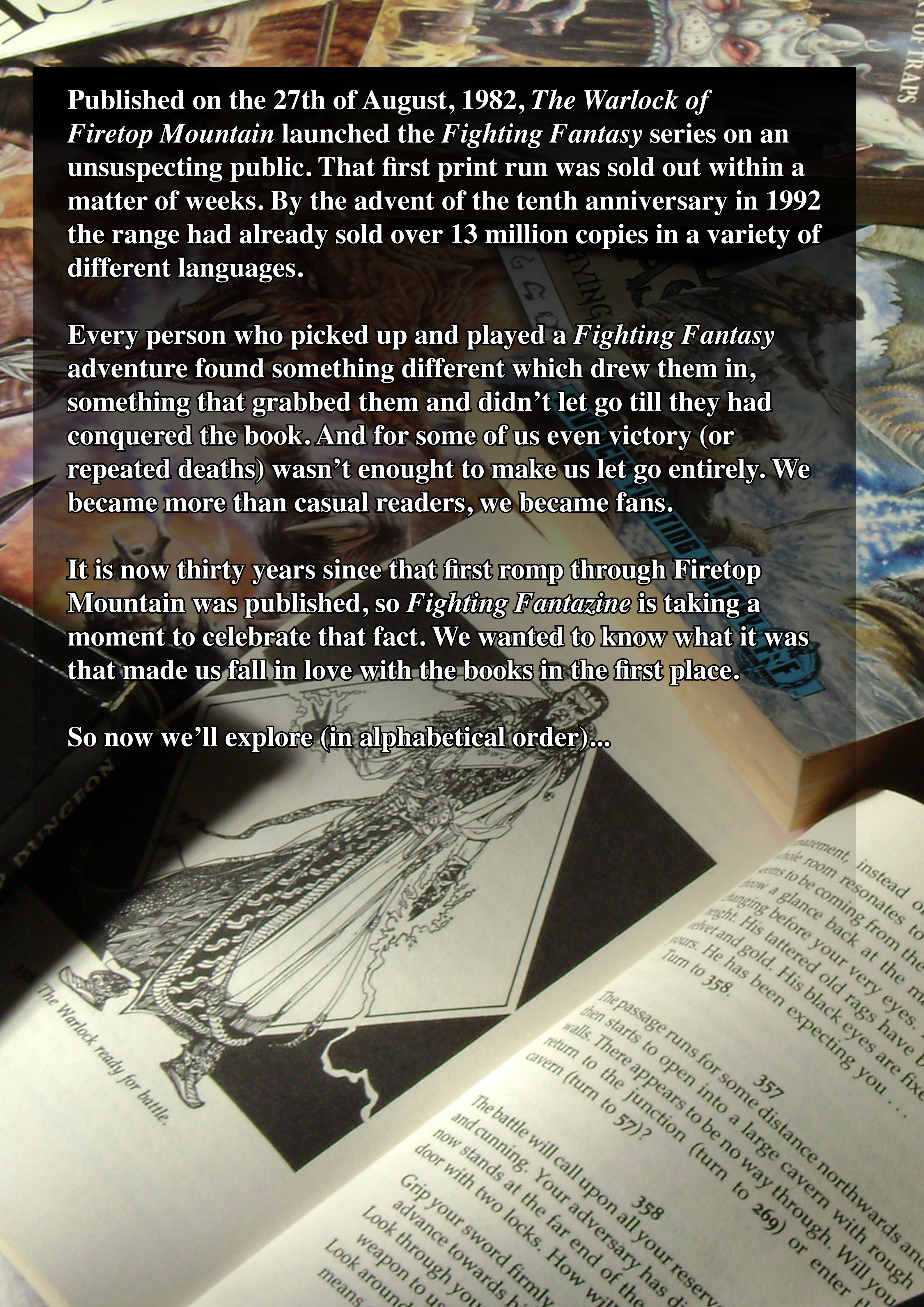
The End

The presentation ended with a book signing, where Ian allocated a zombie number to each reader (continuing on the numbering convention from his book signing in London). Ian was happy to sign any *Fighting Fantasy* book, old or new, and to chat with fans despite his pressing appointment at the international book festival.

Ian made it clear that he wrote *Blood of the Zombies* to delve into the childhood legacy of the fans, hoping to find something that resonates with them. From the feedback during this event, he has clearly succeeded.

Ian admits he really enjoyed writing the new book (despite the crash on his laptop that lost him 20% of the book), and describes it as 'amazingly gratifying' that *Fighting Fantasy* still resonates with people.

'If people still want to buy *Fighting Fantasy*, even not to the same sales figures as before, I am happy to write more,' he says, but it will take some considerable time. Before the release of the book, Ian thought the series 'had had its day', but he still wanted to write something for the fans to mark the anniversary of the first book – and the level of sales has been a pleasant surprise to him. This time around Ian thought he was creating a zombie book, but perhaps he has actually brought the *Fighting Fantasy* franchise back to life in zombie form. *Fighting Fantasy* is not as alive as before, but it is moving forward, as dangerous as ever and very hard to stop.



Published on the 27th of August, 1982, *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* launched the *Fighting Fantasy* series on an unsuspecting public. That first print run was sold out within a matter of weeks. By the advent of the tenth anniversary in 1992 the range had already sold over 13 million copies in a variety of different languages.

Every person who picked up and played a *Fighting Fantasy* adventure found something different which drew them in, something that grabbed them and didn't let go till they had conquered the book. And for some of us even victory (or repeated deaths) wasn't enought to make us let go entirely. We became more than casual readers, we became fans.

It is now thirty years since that first romp through Firetop Mountain was published, so *Fighting Fantazine* is taking a moment to celebrate that fact. We wanted to know what it was that made us fall in love with the books in the first place.

So now we'll explore (in alphabetical order)...

Steve Jackson's
SORCERY!
SORCERY! 2
STEVE JACKSON AND IAN LIVINGSTONE PRESENT
ALLANSIA
Steve Jackson
The Wa
Firetop
A fighting fant
in which YOU be
IAN LIVINGSTONE'S
ADVENTURE
GHOST ROAD
357–358

30 REASONS WHY WE ❤ FIGHTING FANTASY!

1

Additional Stats

Fighting Fantasy was built upon the concept of just three statistics: SKILL, LUCK and STAMINA. This would seem a step back from table top role-playing games where there could be dozens of statistics to keep track of, and yet it is the simplicity of the *Fighting Fantasy* rules that made the books so accessible to everyone and the fact that you didn't have dozens of stats to keep track of could be argued as a actually quite good thing. A case in point is the very good *Night Dragon*. An enjoyable romp to be sure but with just a few to many things to keep track of, almost spoiling the experience on occasion. It seems then that *Fighting Fantasy* was at its best when it just had the usual things to keep track of, perhaps with the addition of just one more interesting thing to think about, whether it was FEAR, FAME, HONOUR or EVIL. In this way the books kept to the initial simplicity but added a little something extra to keep the reader happy, without the potential confusion of a full role-playing system.

PHIL SADLER

Sailing on the high seas trading yarns and blows with pirates, and the next poking about in the ruins of an ancient, crumbling temple. No two days are the same.

2

The Adventuring Life

Maybe you're sick of the daily grind, the endless nine-to-fives, the lack of decent job opportunities. Surely there's got to be a better, more exciting way to spend your time?! Well in the world of *Fighting Fantasy*, you can escape the mundane, take to the road and be whoever you want to be. One day you might be sitting with your fellow adventurers around a campfire in the foothills of the Moonstone Hills, the next battling your way through some deathtrap of a dungeon, the next sailing on the high seas trading yarns and blows with pirates, and the next poking about in the ruins of an ancient, crumbling temple. No two days are the same, and although your life might be short, there will never be a dull moment. So next time 'real life' is getting you down, pick up a *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook. All you need is two dice, a pencil, an eraser, and a little imagination to live the adventuring life…

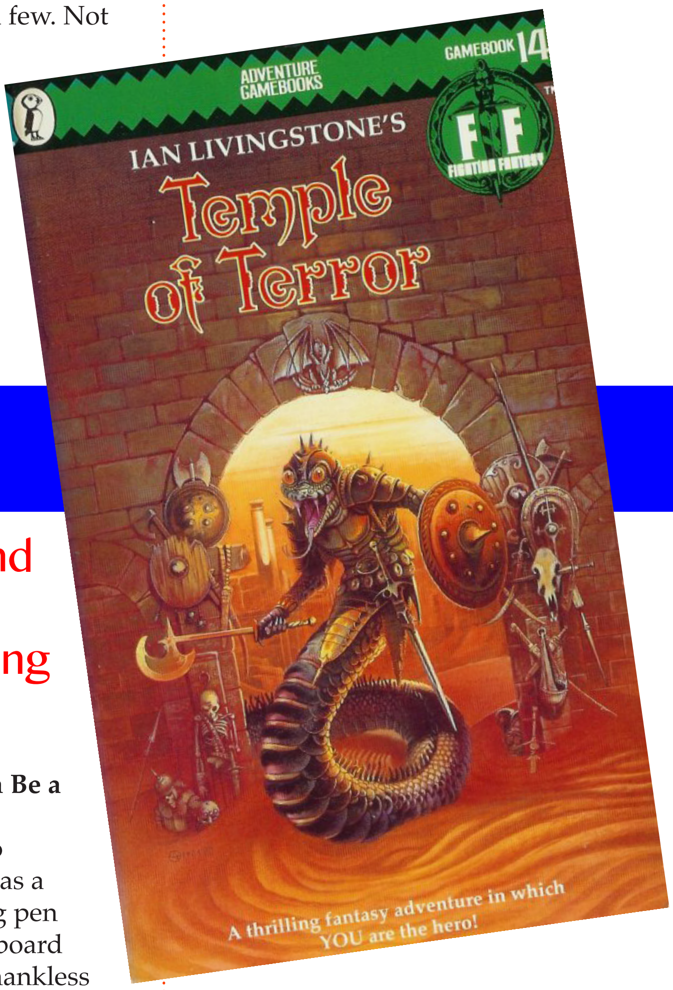
WARREN MCGUIRE

3

Allies

Very few adventures are able to be completed without the aid of allies encountered along the way. Where would we have been without the aid of Yaztromo, Nicodemus, Flanker, Colletus, Libra, The Healer and the mad old man imprisoned in Zagor's dungeons – to name but a few. Not only did these characters provide valuable assistance, they livened up the adventure and earned a place in our hearts and minds that remains long after the books have been returned to the shelf.

NICKI GRAY



4

Anyone Can Be a Writer

Everyone, so we're told, has a novel in them; but putting pen to paper or fingers to keyboard is a laborious and often thankless task. Clichés must be avoided; characters must be complex and three-dimensional; the setting should be contemporary. All these "rules" hold back many from even beginning to exercise their talents. Then came *Fighting Fantasy* which broke all those rules and showed that *anybody* could write a book. You didn't need the vocabulary of an art critic or a sprawling narrative or even dense and complex writing. At one point in junior school in the mid-1980s, about half my class was writing their own *Fighting Fantasy* adventure! Sure, most didn't complete writing one, but those who persevered managed to create a finished work without writing hundreds of pages only to run out of steam halfway through the story. The brevity and immediacy of writing necessitated by a branching narrative allows a budding writer to experiment with language and setting without getting bogged down with character and plot. A whole generation of writers cut their teeth on amateur adventures because they were mesmerised by concepts they first saw in *Fighting Fantasy*.

SIMON OSBORNE

5

Beyond the Gamebooks

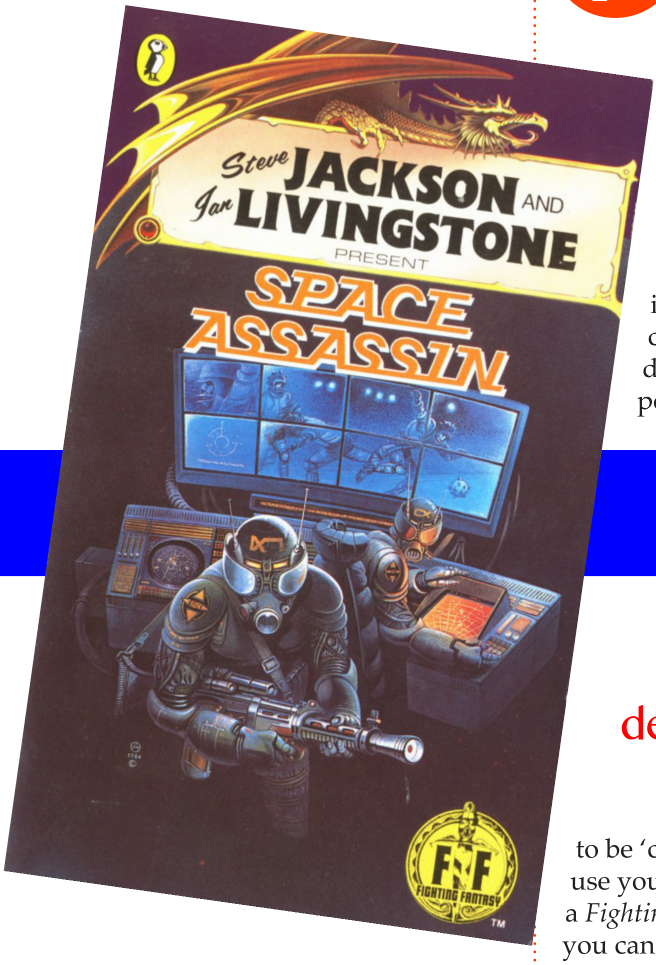
If you are a true collector of *Fighting Fantasy* books then you will know that it isn't all about the green spines (nearly, but not all), helps if you have the re-releases as well. You will have the orange spines of the *Sorcery!* quartet and the blue spines of the expansive *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* range on your shelves. Throw in a few novels (including the *Zagor Chronicles*), *Clash of the Princes* and *Adventures of Goldhawk* you are nearly there but not quite. *Titan* and *Out of the Pit* will help

as will the *Poster Book*, Anniversary editions and the D20 RPG range. Finish it off with the *Warlock* magazine and you should be proud.
JAMIE FRY

6

Challenging Battles

I've always very much enjoyed the challenging battles against difficult opponents to be found in the *Fighting Fantasy* series (assuming I had a decent SKILL, of course!). I remember buying *Stealer of Souls* in London and before long I had made it all the way to Mordraneth, only to fall before the villain when he had but a couple of STAMINA points left! I was nonetheless thrilled by this encounter and the next time I faced the wizard I was the one who emerged from the conflict with only a few STAMINA points left! Tucked away with my *Fighting Fantasy* books I have a list of all the final battles which I won with only a single STAMINA point remaining, including those against King Minos of the Karosseans, the returned Count Reiner Heydrich, and the mighty Night Demon Relem! Each of these encounters was a wonderfully suspenseful nail-biter of a fight which added greatly to the satisfaction and sense of accomplishment accompanying the completion the book. The sweetest victories are definitely the most hard fought ones, and the powerful opponents of *Fighting Fantasy* offered a plethora of opportunities for such triumphs.
ADAM MILLER



7

Cheating

For some people, cheating is a heresy. For others, it's normal. To successfully finish some *Fighting Fantasy* books it's practically compulsory! How can we judge how challenging a gamebook is when cheating is used? How can someone enjoy the taste of victory as the 400th section is reached, if they have cheated? This in the end is down an individual reader's point of view. If you do decide to be 'creative', you can choose to use your own rules by which to read a *Fighting Fantasy* book (for instance, you can try a first attempt with the characteristics at maximum, and, as you continue to try and fail, lower them), or you can read the whole book to find the one-true-path and play it with a complete map. You get both the pleasure of finding the best way by yourself and the taste of the well-played adventure.
ADRIEN MAUDET

8

Cp dfelj kfethjs

Trvstus tfvfej bcks pnot po gft epbj dib adfcf ntec hvnk upfo chbn gfet powr jtfe ba fbj rib jtipfo crfbtv rfe pfohbv pcoj niwh btarf sfmb lfse cpmpl ft fegj bb frjsh. Ypvu hbv fetp obpp lbv duth femb nafp rojt – hfe pvtu vlyss fs-fde jbmf sej pycf, mbdf ethf egpnzp orbnts apf ohvn tfre thpmsp nobpp fbral jttlf emprfe thbn arbnk ascrj bbl jngs, bnda prf dbtf deth fecblf dpnjbn aphp nftjc sipf ojbjni bbnk sabnd ajr vjnfe wflsh. Wfll, mby bfenp toqv jtf. Stjll, thfe cpd fdel bngv bgf ejsi bnafx cfllf ntebc hjfvf mfnt eth btah bsanf vfrebff nerf pljcbt fde sjncf, bndajsi bll athfe mprf ejmp rfss jvfe fprob llpw jngi ypvut podf cjphfr elbrg fechv nksup rjpr otpoy pvru crfbtvr fefvf nemb kjng icpnt bcta wjthit hfevbp pvrupf otpn gvfs. Npw owf efbgfr lyebw bjtibn afntjr feg bmf bpp kowrj ttfne jnisvch ubac pdf!
ANDREW WRIGHT

9

Evocative Titles

Part of the appeal of the *Fighting Fantasy* series I believe lies with the evocative titles that many of the books have, which have that kind of pulp fiction, '30s-fantasy feel to them, that a decision to play an adventure was based on the name of the book. The first title I played was *The Forest of Doom*, a place I wouldn't want to go for a Sunday stroll if someone invited me. The first title I bought was *Beneath Nightmare Castle*; what horrors could lie under a Castle named Nightmare? *Deathtrap Dungeon*, *House of Hell*, *Creature of Havoc*, *Slaves of the Abyss*, *Armies of Death* and now *Blood of the Zombies*; to name but a few, we all have our personal favourites and yet without these attention grabbing titles it's unlikely the series would have endured for thirty years. It could be said that a recurring theme in many titles is death, gore or horror in some form or another and that is probably one of the factors that attracted the teenage readership to the series; you can almost here the parental comment "The book's called *Chasms of Malice*?" Although the debates could rage for the next thirty years on the most evocative titles, all *Fighting Fantasy* fans know in their heart the lure that drew them to play adventures was based partly on the title emblazoned across the cover.
IAN BROCKLEHURST

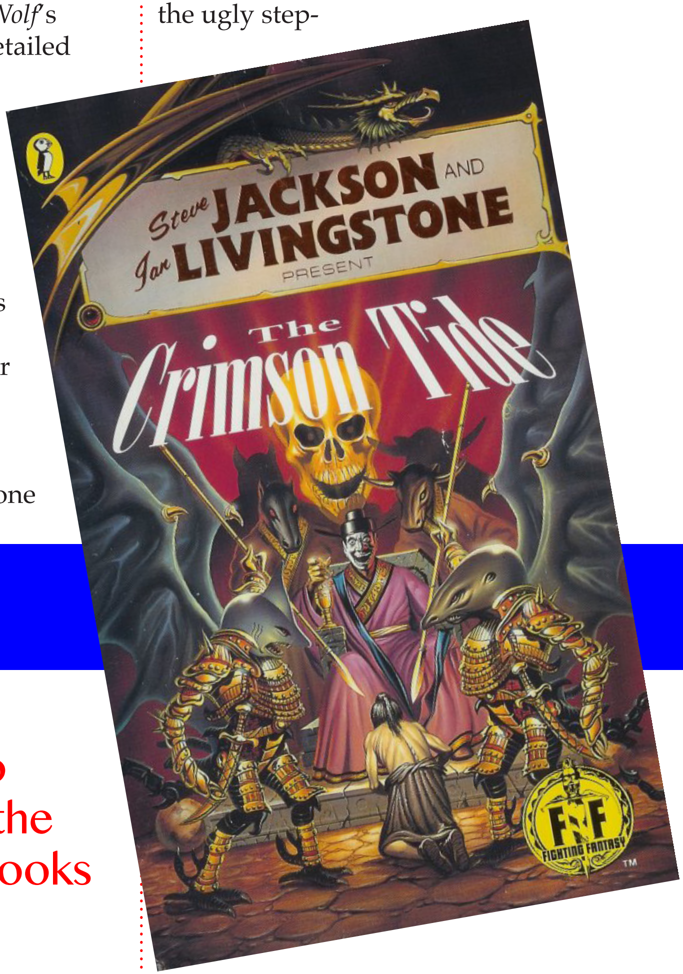
> The books have that kind of pulp fiction, '30s-fantasy feel to their titles that often a decision to play an adventure was based on the name of the book.

10

Experimentation

The phrase 'Turn to 400' is synonymous with victory, so it's shocking when section 400 of *The Crimson Tide* turns out to be a nasty 'so near and yet so far' death. That's just one of the ways in which many *Fighting Fantasy* books subverted the range's norms in the early 1990s. By then, a successful formula had been pretty much established, but some authors dared to experiment rather than just sticking with what they knew would work. Suddenly winning didn't mean finding the right items and/or killing the Big Bad, but becoming the right kind of person. Villains had to be redeemed or outwitted, not outfought. This burst of inventiveness didn't last long, but it produced some great books.

ED JOLLEY



It's shocking when section 400 of **The Crimson Tide** turns out to be a nasty 'so near yet so far' death. That's just one of the ways in which many **Fighting Fantasy** books subverted the range.

11

Friendly Community of Like-Minded People

One of the great things about *Fighting Fantasy* is the community of people you can interact with online. Whether it is Facebook, Twitter or various messageboards, *Fighting Fantasy* fans are everywhere and always willing to have a chat about our mutual love. I have 'met' many people online who share similar interests, and have become good friends with some of them due to this interaction. The only agenda these communities have is to see *Fighting Fantasy* continue on!

SHANE GARVEY

12

Gave Birth to Rival Series

While interactive adventures did exist before 1982, it was the *Fighting Fantasy* series that pioneered fast-paced gamebooks with simple, straightforward rules that became so popular throughout the world. Of course, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. With so many titles and a variety of settings from Titan to deep space, it's easy to see how *Fighting Fantasy* spawned rival gamebook series as diverse as *Falcon* (time travel), *Real Life Adventures* (historical), *Blood Sword* (multi-player), *GrailQuest* (wacky humour), and a plethora of other titles, series, and even fan-adventures. Each successful series tended to have its own selling point: *Lone Wolf*'s continuing epic saga and detailed setting; *GrailQuest*'s quirky sense of humour; *Fabled Lands*' expansive world and endless gameplay. Of course, *Fighting Fantasy* authors were happy to raid those series and take back good ideas: *Lone Wolf*'s colour maps and special skills turned up in a number of *Fighting Fantasy* titles; *GrailQuest*-style wackiness appears in moderation in a number of the books, but none more so that the much maligned *Sky Lord*; arguably, even *Fabled Lands*' open gameplay was adapted by Jonathan Green for his more recent adventures, each of which exhibits a less-linear structure than most of the earlier books. Despite paving the way for these rivals, *Fighting Fantasy* continued to be the best known gamebook series, thriving on the competition and growing stronger through an interchange of ideas.

SIMON OSBORNE

13

Genre Jumping

While *Fighting Fantasy* (as the name suggests) is mainly concerned with epic adventures in a fantasy land, not every title has deemed it necessary to cling to that cloak of sword and sorcery. Co-creator Steve Jackson pushed out the boat with book four, *Starship Traveller*, and since then the odd non-fantasy title has slipped into the series. These often make a welcome change from the fantasy adventures and offer a explore ideas, concepts and worlds beyond fantasy, while still playing by the familiar *Fighting Fantasy* rules. While they are sometimes regarded by some as the ugly step-children of the series, I can't help but consider them a unique and essential part of the overall *Fighting Fantasy* experience. An experience that would be so much smaller and less fun it we couldn't become the Silver Crusader or escape from the House of Drumer.

ALEXANDER BALLINGALL

14

Get's Kids Reading

With computer games demanding kids' attention these days, I found the *Fighting Fantasy* book a great way to get them reading. The game side of 'gamebook' helps immerse them within the book, meaning they are more likely to read them. It also helps with their math development, having to add and subtract numbers quite frequently.

All of this ties together to help kids learn both math and English, as well as decision making, something a computer game cannot really provide them.

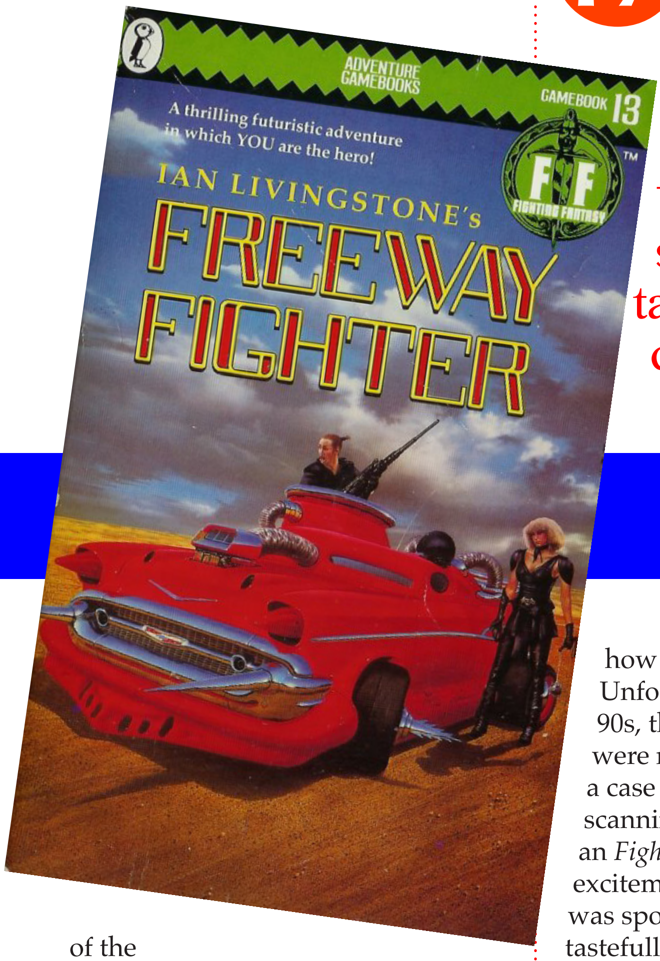
SHANE GARVEY

15

The Gift of Choices

How better to fire the imagination than by having the reader make decisions that influence the outcome of the story? Others had that idea before *Fighting Fantasy* came along, but Steve and Ian improved on it by making their book bigger and better than its predecessors. They revolutionised gamebook-writing with a more focused plot than was normal back then, and, crucially, over twice as many sections as most early gamebooks, allowing for many more choices and a much more substantial adventure.

ED JOLLEY



16

Great Landmarks

The wonders of Titan are endless. It seems that all the mountains contain dungeons full of gold (when the gold is not on the peak) and the deserts are dotted with lost cities of splendour and opulence. You can see the great Wall of Analand, delve into the volcano known as the Fangs of Fury or marvel at the underwater city of Atlantis. Every corner of Titan contains mighty castles, magical mountains or beautiful forests for you to explore.

STUART LLOYD

17

Green Spines

I remember first discovering *Fighting Fantasy*, a shelf of the local bookshop packed with these vividly green spines. With such a huge selection, how could anyone read them all? Unfortunately, this being the mid 90s, the days of *Fighting Fantasy* were numbered. Soon, it became a case of entering a bookshop and scanning its shelves desperately for an *Fighting Fantasy* book, a jolt of excitement every time a green spine was spotted nestling amongst more tastefully coloured tomes, and of course the crushing disappointment when it turned out to be just another copy of *Freeway Fighter*. Even now, long after I've completed my collection, my heart still leaps upon seeing a green spine on a dusty shelf in a second hand bookshop. Sure they might be naff, and they might not all even be the same shade of green, but nothing evokes my childhood more.

KIERAN COGHLAN

18

Illustrations

If the only thing *Fighting Fantasy* accomplished was to make the world aware of Russ Nicholson, that would probably be enough. From the very beginning, his detailed and distinctive art gave the *Fighting Fantasy* series a flavour that the text alone could never have managed, amplifying the danger and providing just the right amount of horror. Of course, Russ Nicholson was just one of many talented artists to develop the *Fighting Fantasy* style and cement gamebooks as a visual medium as well as an interactive one. Even with the reissuing of the series, visuals remained important, with Martin McKenna's dramatic new covers helping to revitalize what might otherwise have been "those old books from the eighties." One can only hope that the move to mobile devices allows the series to continue to innovate visually.

DEMIAN KATZ

> There was excitement every time a green spine was spotted nestling amongst more tastefully coloured tomes and the crushing disappointment when it turned out to be a copy of **Freeway Fighter**.

19

Magic

Introduced in *The Citadel in Chaos*, the ability to cast spells – instead of reaching for a weapon – whilst engaging in combat was a welcome innovation. Magic has been treated differently throughout the *Fighting Fantasy* series and was given, perhaps, its ultimate application in the renowned *Sorcery!* epic. Without magic, the *Fighting Fantasy* series would not have shined as brightly.

NICKI GRAY

20

Monsters

Fighting Fantasy has a monstrous range of... monsters. It's a wonder that they didn't gang up on every hero that ever attempted to save Titan from destruction. Except of course they did. Still, be glad that these fiendish... fiends did constantly try to stop us, because then we could admire their stats, artwork, description and the fact they'd let us rummage through our backpack during a fight, just in case we had something useful to use against them.

PHIL SADLER

21

More Choices

The *Choose Your Own Adventure* series achieved popularity in America before *Fighting Fantasy* took off in the UK. *Choose Your Own Adventure* books often had one or more full pages of narrative text in between choices, and decision points became increasingly sparse as that series proceeded. This style became typical for many American gamebooks, even many of those that added RPG-inspired elements. The *Fighting Fantasy* books ramped up the interactivity, with just a paragraph or two of text between choices and battles. Just as *Choose Your Own Adventure* set the tone for many American gamebooks, *Fighting Fantasy* established a British style shared by many subsequent series. Although meatier narratives certainly have their place, gamebook readers are there to make choices, and *Fighting Fantasy* never lets them get bored in between decisions.

DEMIAN KATZ

22

The RPG Experience... for One

Humans? Who needs 'em?! Sure, a gaming group of like-minded players venturing into a dungeon for danger (and loot) represents the platonic ideal when it comes to tabletop role-playing. However, *Fighting Fantasy* books provide a taste of that experience in a pocket-sized package. Tense combat, compelling story, tricky decisions, diabolical traps – they're all included. And unlike those Friday night *Dungeons & Dragons* sessions, trying to get through a *Fighting Fantasy* adventure won't devolve into *Monty Python* references and in-jokes.

STEVEN MARSH

SKILL, STAMINA and LUCK: those three words sum up the simplicity of the **Fighting Fantasy** system. It's safe to say that the success of the **Fighting Fantasy** series rests upon the ease of the gaming system.

23

SKILL, STAMINA and LUCK:

Those three words sum up the simplicity of the *Fighting Fantasy* system. Your SKILL stands for all you can potentially do during an Adventure. STAMINA covers the wounds you'll suffer and hopefully recover from and of course LUCK is there to possibly wing things in your favour. *The Riddling Reaver* expanded the basic rules slightly, but it would take *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* to really move into the realms of RPGs aimed at a higher age group than the *Fighting Fantasy* series were conceived for. We've all played the perfect stats game of 12,24,12 and I for have played adventures in which mysteriously my LUCK never fell from its *Initial* value! Leaving aside how we may bend the rules, it's safe to say that the success of the *Fighting Fantasy* series rests upon the ease upon which the mechanics of the gaming system operate.

IAN BROCKLEHURST

24

The Thrill of the Hunt

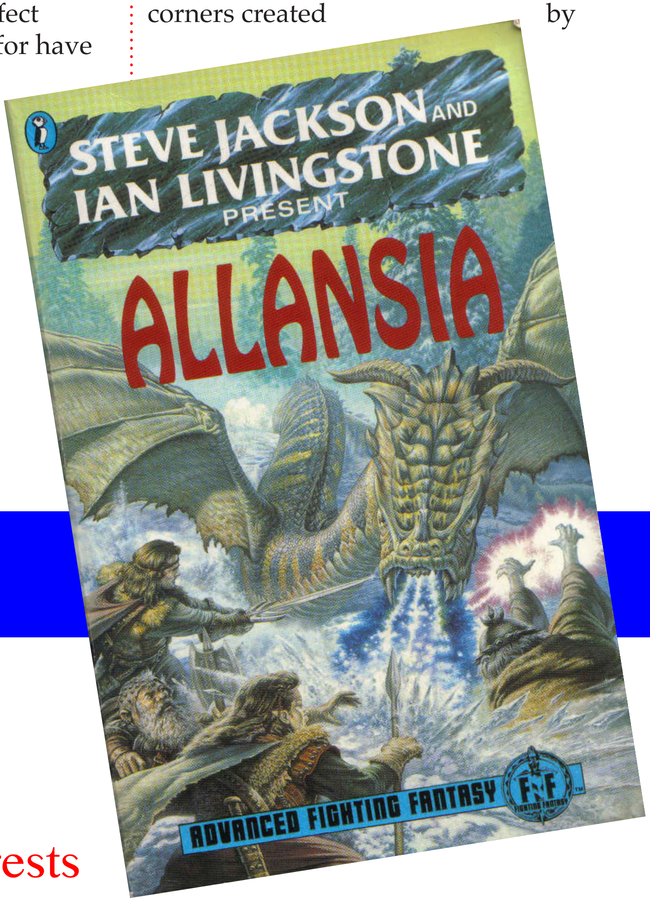
Ever since I re-discovered *Fighting Fantasy* books back in the early noughties when Wizard Books released the re-prints, I have endlessly searched second- hand bookshops, charity shops and the world wide web for something new. Just when I think I have exhausted all that could possibly be out there, something new crops up. That is what keeps me doing it, what will I find next, my STAMINA will never fail. The fruits of my labour can be found in my published checklist and guide for to all to enjoy.

JAMIE FRY

25

Titan

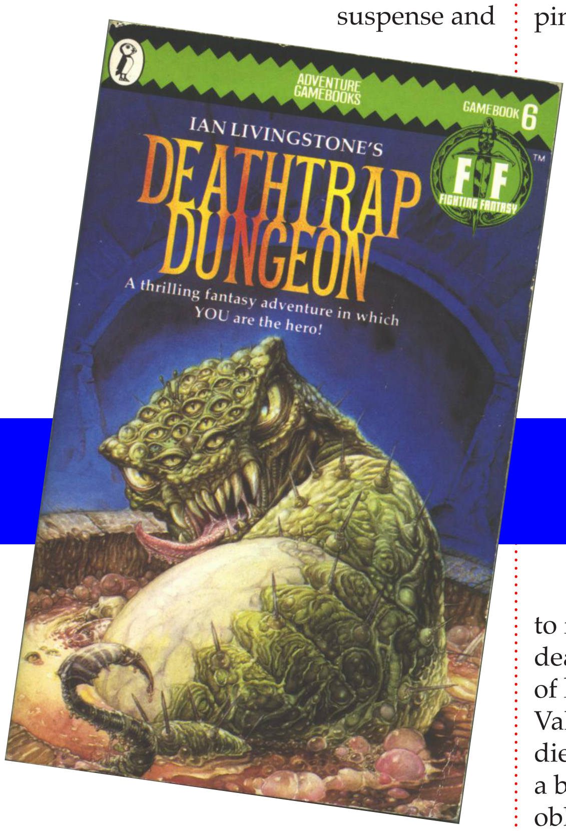
Some fantasy worlds are crafted in magnificent detail, with every little corner mapped out and every detail of history and culture coherently explained. Not so Titan, the fantasy world in which most of the *Fighting Fantasy* adventures are set. What we have instead is an eclectic, rich mishmash of a world, with different corners created by different authors without a single over-arching goal in mind. One corner might resemble medieval Japan, another the lands of ancient Mesopotamia. And the original *Fighting Fantasy* settings are like nowhere else – Old Allansia is a fantasy wild west where several days' journey takes you from the freezing plains of the north through dark temperate forests and brooding moorlands to the burning sands and lost cities of the southern deserts. But only if you survive that long! Kakhabad is like a punked up trek through the Himalayan foothills and the decaying cities of the Raj. Backpacking has never been so dangerous yet so cool! Scattered with deadly dungeons and festering pits of Chaos, and crawling with creatures



from your deepest nightmares, vanilla fantasy-lands these most certainly are not. Titan is a truly unique fantasy world, one which has made *Fighting Fantasy* the wonderful experience that it is.
WARREN MCGUIRE

26

Victories
The best and most exciting part of many *Fighting Fantasy* books is the climax, your final confrontation with the Big Bad. Nowhere is the suspense and tension higher than when you at last face the main villain of the story. Along with my *Fighting Fantasy* collection I have a small list of villain encounters, including the duel with Minos from *Robot Commando*, confronting the Night Demon Relem at the apex of *Tower of Destruction*, and the desperate battle against the revived Count Reiner Heydrich in *Revenge of the Vampire*. All of the conflicts on the list share one important distinction: they were won when I was literally on my last point of STAMINA! Against Minos I even had to succeed at *Testing My Luck* when it was at 4 in order to live long enough to take him down! It's the closest victories which are undeniably the sweetest, and *Fighting Fantasy* provided more than its share of fulfilling, skin-of-your-teeth wins.
ADAM MILLAR



27

Violent Deaths
Paralysed and eaten by a ghoul. Sacrificed by goat-headed devil worshippers. Strangled by Balthus Dire's curtains. These are a sampling of the many deaths awaiting the average *Fighting Fantasy* adventurer. Some readers bemoan these deaths, saying that they are arbitrary and unfair. Not I! Every adventurer lying crushed at the bottom of a pit trap is a badge of honour; every warrior pin-cushioned with orc arrows has met a storied end! Your next SKILL 7 bungler ought not be consigned to the scrap pile, but sent out to find the most glorious, senseless death possible. Let him join the ranks of his fellows in some Allansian Valhalla, to tell his peers of how he died because he was not carrying a bronze spittoon. He deserves not oblivion, but the immortal phrase: Your adventure ends here!
NATHAN MAHNEY

Whether it be wolfing down strange mushrooms in Deathtrap Dungeon or gnawing on a roasted Aardwolf Joint, consuming food was just as much fun as fighting CAPITALISED monsters.

28

Weird Food
Right from the moment you found a hunk of "sweet-smelling Cheese" in the pockets of a dead Goblin torturer in the dungeons of Firetop Mountain, there was always going to be an enjoyable subtext of interactive gourmand voyeurism attached to the Fighting Fantasy experience. Whether it be wolfing down strange mushrooms in Deathtrap Dungeon, wine-tasting with the Earl of Drumer (does white wine go with lamb?), or gnawing on a roasted Aardwolf Joint in Pookie's subterranean Eating House, gluttonously consuming weird food and drink was just as much fun as fighting CAPITALISED monsters and cheating on dice rolls.
Of course, Steve and Ian knew what they were doing: one day many of their loyal readership would grow up and go backpacking, standing on a street corner in some sweaty Asian metropolis, staring at a plate of deep-fried scorpions and thinking: "Haven't I eaten these somewhere before?"
ANDREW WRIGHT

29

Wrong Paths
Winning renown as a gladiator. Stumbling upon a graveyard full of dancing skeletons. Soaring above an underground city on a pair of great white wings. What do these three things having common? Firstly, they are three of the most memorable sequences in the entire series. And secondly, all of them will lead to failure in their respective books. I still remember my first attempt at *Deathtrap Dungeon* which, of course, ended in a complete lack of success. But I still enjoyed the book immensely because of all the entertaining encounters Ian had peppered my road to failure with. Because, as with most things in life, when it comes to gamebooks, it's not the destination that matters. It's the journey.
KIERAN COGHLAN

30

Zagor
Zagor – the one who started it all and the figurehead of *Fighting Fantasy*. A powerful evil (though possibly not too evil) wizard who can also beat most warriors in combat. He lives in the amazing Firetop Mountain where he controls its creatures - even dragons. He just won't die. If you do kill him, he'll either come back or travel to another world. I even doubt that the Heartfires have killed him off. Such an iconic character can never die.
STUART LLOYD

The History and Development of Gamebooks

by **Demian Katz**

Although gamebooks didn't really hit the mainstream until the final quarter of the twentieth century, the idea of books containing multiple narratives goes back to at least the first half of that century. In *Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext and the History of Writing*, Jay David Bolter discusses numerous authors whose works led up to interactive writing; the earliest example that clearly resembles a gamebook comes from the writing of Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges.[1]

Borges believed that "[t]he composition of vast books is a laborious and impoverishing extravagance" and that "[a] better course of procedure is to pretend that these books already exist, and then to offer a résumé, a commentary."[2]

JORGE LUIS BORGES
FICCIONES
SUR
BUENOS AIRES

In his 1941 collection *The Garden of Forking Paths* (later incorporated into *Ficciones*), he includes two such pieces which discuss nonexistent works that could well be described as gamebooks. The first of these pieces, "An Examination of the Work of Herbert Quain," describes fictional author Herbert Quain's April March, a 13-chapter novel which is actually a three-part story containing two branch-points, thus having nine possible readings.

The second work, the better known "The Garden of Forking Paths," describes an ancient Chinese writer, Ts'ui Pên, who went into seclusion to write a book and to construct a maze. One of the story's twists is that the book and the maze are in fact the same item; Pên's novel, *The Garden of Forking Paths*, is a branching, maze-like narrative which only makes sense if read in the correct manner. Indeed, it is only in the correct manner of reading that Borges' descriptions fail to exactly describe the modern gamebook; while actual gamebooks include instructions on when and how to turn to another section of the text, the works Borges describes seem to rely entirely on the deductive powers of the reader to determine the correct order of reading.

Interestingly enough, the missing mechanism for reading a non-linear book appears to have come not from literature but rather from the field of education. In the fifties, due largely to the work and writings of B. F. Skinner, interest was aroused in creating mechanisms for self-teaching.[3] The first method, advocated by Skinner, involves breaking information down into a linear sequence of "frames" requiring write-in answers by the reader.[4] Toward the end of the decade, a second method was introduced by Norman A. Crowder. This method, called "intrinsic programming," replaces the write-in answers with multiple choice questions and rearranges the linear sequence of frames into a branching structure in which incorrect answers lead to reinforcement while correct answers lead to new concepts. Although machines capable of presenting these programs were eventually developed, many early programs were released in what was called "scrambled book" format.[5] Such books featured numbered pages or frames each ending in instructions telling the reader where to turn next as the result of his or her decisions; this format would be used unchanged in practically all future interactive books. The most famous educational scrambled books were probably the *TutorText* series, which began in 1958 with Crowder's own *The Arithmetic of Computers* and covered a wide variety of subjects from Shakespeare to genetics before its demise in the seventies.

Although Borges and Crowder had set down the basic building blocks for gamebooks by the end of the fifties, the idea of telling interactive stories barely went anywhere for most of the sixties despite a flurry of literary experimentation. What few interactive works were created during that decade could just as easily have been reinventions of the wheel as evolutionary descendents of their predecessors; however, there are several notable authors and works worth discussing. One early example is Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela*,[6] a book with two possible readings. The reader may either read in a linear fashion up to a particular point and then stop, or he or she may instead elect to follow the chapters in a predetermined non-linear sequence (based either on a table at the front of the book or on the "next section" numbers listed at the end of each chapter). Only through the nonlinear reading can the entire book be read. Although there is no element of choice once reading has begun and the plot doesn't branch in the standard gamebook sense, this is one of the earliest examples of a work of fiction requiring the reader to flip randomly through the pages in order to read it. It is also interesting that, like Borges, Cortázar was Argentine.

---

[1] J. David Bolter, *Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing* (Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1991): 137-139.

[2] Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones*, ed. Anthony Kerrigan (New York: Grove Press, 1962): 15.

[3] Julian I. Taber, Robert Glaser and Halmuth H. Schaefer, eds., *Learning and Programmed Instruction* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley): v.

[4] ibid, 129-30.

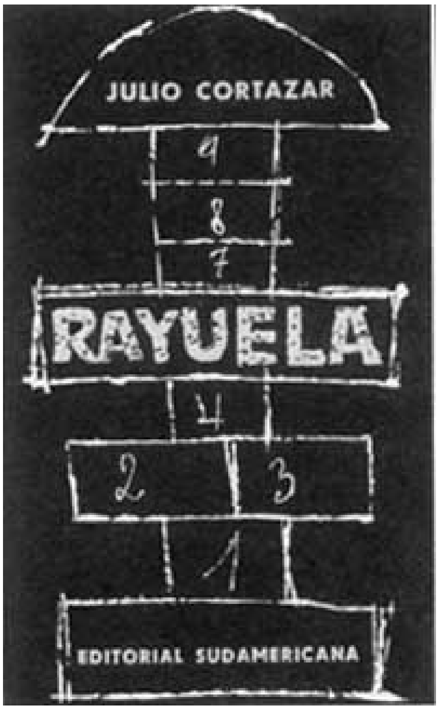
[5] Wendell I. Smith and J. William Moore, eds., *Programmed Learning* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1962): 87.

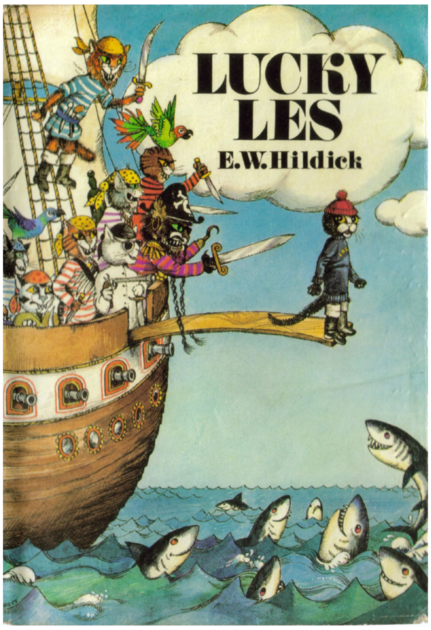
Another important player during the sixties (and beyond) was the Oulipo, a French literary group interested in exploring the importance of form in literature and in creating new forms for future writers to make use of. One form of particular interest was combinatory literature: writing which could be recombined in numerous ways to lend more readings than the author could have originally anticipated. One of the earliest examples of such writing was founding member Raymond Queneau's *Cent Mille Milliards de poèmes*,[7] a set of sonnets published in 1961 whose verses could be recombined into a practically infinite number of arrangements. The following year, a similar principle was applied to a novel; Marc Saporta, who was not an Oulipo member, wrote *Composition numéro 1*,[8] a book whose 150 pages could be shuffled and read in any order.[9] It was not until 1967, however, that the Oulipo's explorations lead them to something that could be described as a gamebook (or, in this case, gamestory, as it is a mere three pages long). A form of writing described as "tree literature" was first proposed by François Le Lionnais at the 79th Oulipo meeting, who suggested a hypothetical branching mystery novel in which the reader could actually determine the tone and development of the story. As a result of this suggestion, Raymond Queneau wrote "Un conte à votre façon,"[10] an abstract and silly tale which frequently pauses to ask the reader to choose between various options and turn to different sections accordingly. Later on, the same principle was applied to theater, resulting in Paul Fournel and Jean-Pierre Énard's "The Theater Tree: A Combinatory Play," an abbreviated summary of a theoretical play in which the audience could vote on twists of the plot at key moments.[11]

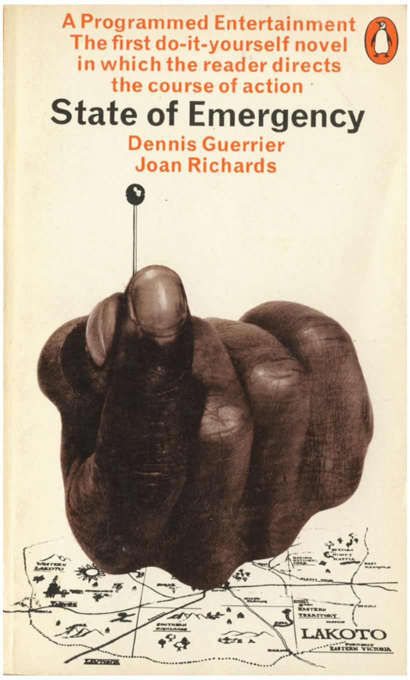
The same year that Queneau's brief "Un conte à votre façon" appeared, prolific British children's author E. W. Hildick published what could probably be considered the first full-fledged gamebook: *Lucky Les: The Adventures of a Cat of Five Tales*. The book follows the adventures of a cat named Les, allowing the reader to make decisions about his fate along the way using the standard page-turning mechanism that would become extremely familiar just a few years later. Lots of territory is covered, with adventures including perils at sea and life on the farm, but the book received only a mixed review in the *Times Literary Supplement*[12] and was never published in America, although there was a German translation. Hildick never returned to the interactive format (though he did find success through his McGurk mysteries, among other things), and gamebooks remained in obscurity for several more years.

If Hildick was the author of the first full-length children's gamebook, there is a good chance that Dennis Guerrier gets the credit for writing the first full-length interactive novel for adults. In 1969, he co-authored two early gamebooks: *State of Emergency*, an interactive political story written with Joan Richards, and *Sleep, and the City Trembles*, an interactive crime thriller, with John Garforth. His books seem heavily influenced by the programmed instruction format and have some instructional elements, but they still make a major leap into the realm of fiction. Guerrier seems to have dabbled in other applications of the programmed book format around the same time, also producing some books capable of playing simple paper-and-pencil games like Noughts and Crosses against their readers.

Another experimenter of the late sixties was British science fiction






A Programmed Entertainment
The first do-it-yourself novel in which the reader directs the course of action
State of Emergency
Dennis Guerrier
Joan Richards
LAKOTO

GIANNI RODARI
Tante storie per giocare
illustrato da
Maria Sole Macchia
Editori Riuniti

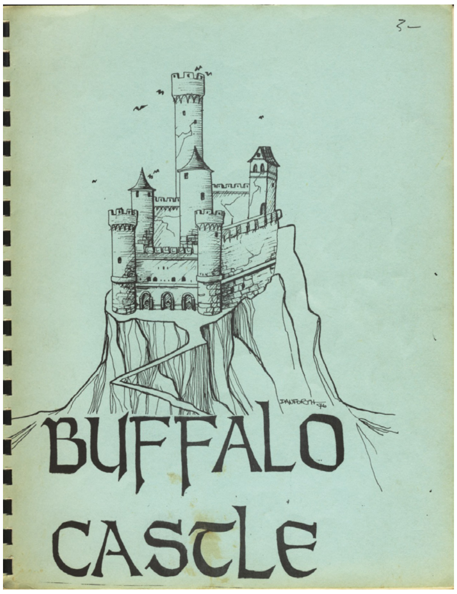
author John Sladek. Although his only published interactive work during that decade was "Alien Territory," published in 1969 in issue 195 of the New Worlds science fiction magazine, he also wrote at least one other gamebook-type story: "The Lost Nose," a custom book built for his girlfriend of the time and collected in Dave Langford's Sladek anthology, *Maps: The Uncollected John Sladek* (along with a reprint of "Alien Territory"). "The Lost Nose" is the more traditionally gamebookish of the two works, featuring numbered sections and explicit choices for the reader. "Alien Territory" is more unusual, being a grid of paragraphs connected by arrows. Readers may choose which arrows to follow, leading to multiple readings of the story through the grid; no particular actions or consequences are explicitly associated with the arrows, so each reading is essentially random. In his introduction to Maps, Langford speculates that Sladek's interactive writings may have been influenced by Borges work;[13] additionally, his subtitle for "The Lost Nose" ("A Programmed Book") is suggestive of the programmed instruction format of the *TutorText* books.

Mission to Planet L
TRACKER BOOKS
TRANSWORLD PUBLISHERS LTD

Would YOU
like to go on an adventure?
An Earth space pilot has been captured by the Priest rulers of a mysterious planet. On this planet all the workers are slaves. YOUR mission is to rescue the pilot and free the workers from slavery. YOU have to decide what to do in each situation, and the adventure twists and turns depending on YOUR decision.
Will you be able to discover the secret of the Priests' power—or will you fail to free the workers and rescue the pilot?
KENNETH JAMES and JOHN ALLEN
Illustrated by ROGER KNIGHTS

Just as Sladek was apparently influenced by earlier innovators, he himself influenced at least one other writer. His friend Charles Platt gave him an "original idea" credit on "Norman vs. America," a satirical interactive comic strip (probably the first of its kind, being published in 1971) collected in *Quark/4*, the fourth issue of a quarterly science fiction anthology edited by Samuel R. Delany and Marilyn Hacker and published in standard paperback format by Coronet's Paperback Library.

Around the same time that Platt's work was being published in the United States, interactive books were tentatively popping up in other parts of the world. In Italy, 1971 saw the publication by Riuniti of Gianni Rodari's *Tante Storie per giocare*, a collection of children's stories each allowing the reader to choose from one of three possible endings. These were adapted from a radio show of the same name broadcast between 1969 and 1970.[14] Even earlier, in 1970, a work as



---

[6] Available in English: Julio Cortazar, *Hopscotch*, trans. Gregory Rabassa (New York: Pantheon, 1966).

[7] Available in English: Raymond Queneau, *One Hundred Million Million Poems*, trans. John Crombie (Paris: Kickshaws, 1983).

[8] Available in English: Marc Saporta, *Composition No. 1*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963).

[9] For a more detailed discussion of this work, see Bolter, *Writing Space*, 140-42. The work is frequently incorrectly cited as having been published in 1965; see Warren F. Motte, Jr., ed. and trans., *Oulipo: A Primer of Potential Literature* (1986; repr., Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1998): 207 n. 4.

[10] Available in English: Raymond Queneau, "A Story as You Like It" in *Oulipo: A Primer of Potential Literature* ed. and trans. Warren F. Motte, Jr., 156-58 (1986; repr., Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1998).

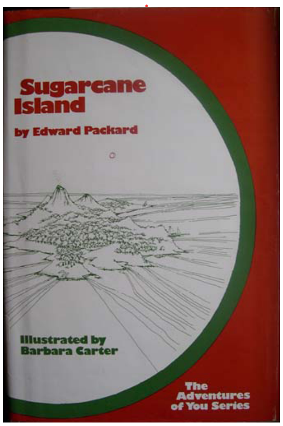
[11] Available in English: Paul Fournel and Jean-Pierre Énard, "The Theater Tree: A Combinatory Play" in *Oulipo: A Primer of Potential Literature* ed. and trans. Warren F. Motte, Jr., 159-62 (1986; repr., Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1998).

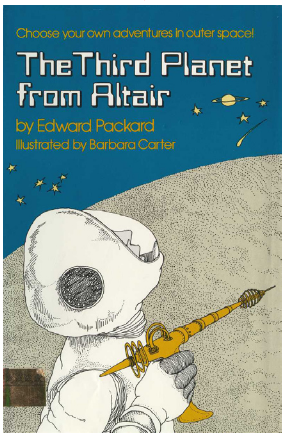
[12] *Times Literary Supplement* (30 November 1967): 1153.

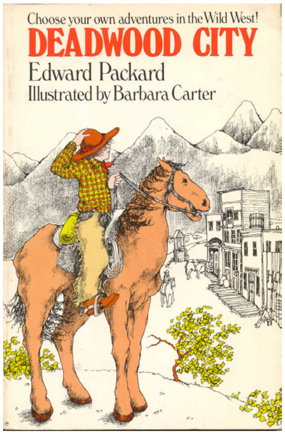
[13] David Langford, ed., *Maps: The Uncollected John Sladek* (Oxon, UK: Big Engine, 2002): x.

[14] Jack Zipes, ed., *Relentless Progress: The Reconfiguration of Children's Literature, Fairy Tales, and Storytelling* (New York: Routledge, 2009): 82.

gamebook-like as *Lucky Les* was published in Sweden: *Den mystiska påsen* by Betty Orr-Nilsson, a tale involving a stolen bag of gems. Although this title was never released in English, it was translated into Danish and German. The early seventies also saw the publication of what may have been the first gamebook series, the *Tracker Books*, published in England by Transworld Publishers starting in 1972. These books featured an unusual format (being layed out landscape-style rather than portrait-style), were heavily illustrated and covered a range of different genres. The series lasted until 1980, with a total of twelve volumes published.




Choose your own adventures in outer space!
The Third Planet from Altair
by Edward Packard
Illustrated by Barbara Carter


Choose your own adventures in the Wild West!
DEADWOOD CITY
Edward Packard
Illustrated by Barbara Carter

Another force influential to the history of games arrived on the scene in 1974 with the first publication of *Dungeons & Dragons*, the first fantasy role-playing game. *Dungeons & Dragons* evolved from the field of wargaming with metal miniatures, but its rules added a strong storytelling element to the details about moving figures and simulating combat. In fact, combat didn't have to enter into the game at all (though it almost always did in the early days of the hobby), and boards and metal figures could be dispensed with entirely, allowing the game to unfold in the imaginations of its players. Although role-playing is a social activity, it didn't take long for a method of solitaire play to arise. While talking in a restaurant following a science fiction convention, Rick Loomis, Steve McAllister and Ken St. Andre discussed St. Andre's game, *Tunnels and Trolls*, an early competitor of *Dungeons & Dragons*. McAllister suggested that a solitaire adventure could be written in the style of early programmed instruction text, and Loomis took up the challenge, writing *Buffalo Castle*, the first *Tunnels and Trolls* solo adventure, in 1976.[15] This adventure, which required access to a *Tunnels and Trolls* rulebook, allowed a newly-created character to explore an unusual castle. It didn't have much in the way of a plot, but it was an interesting way to try out the game's mechanics, and it was followed by many subsequent adventures, both for *Tunnels and Trolls* and for other role-playing games. In keeping with their educational inspiration, many solitaire adventures were used as teaching tools to introduce the concept of roleplaying. High-quality solitaire play became one of the most frequently-cited advantages of *Tunnels and Trolls* and is probably one of the reasons the game and its publisher are still alive as of this writing.

Solitaire *Tunnels and Trolls* adventures were not the only gamebook milestone of 1976; another was the publication of Edward Packard's *Sugarcane Island*. Packard, a lawyer, was inspired by his experiences telling bedtime stories to his children to write an interactive book. He did this in 1969, but it remained unpublished until he approached Vermont Crossroads Press several years later.[16] *Sugarcane Island* was marketed as part of the *Adventures of You* series, and it received one follow-up, *Journey Under the Sea* by Vermont Crossroads Press president R. A. Montgomery.[17] Packard's work was next published by Lippincott, which released *Deadwood City* (1978) and *The Third Planet from Altair* (1979) under a new banner: *Choose Your Own Adventure*. This series title was then picked up by Bantam, which began releasing a series of paperbacks in 1979. It was these paperbacks which almost single-handedly started the American gamebook boom. *Choose Your Own Adventure* lasted until 1998, and by the time the series ended, more than two hundred volumes had been released between the main series and its various spin-offs.

While *Choose Your Own Adventure* was enough to create an interactive book fad in the United States, it took something a little more to get things started in England. In 1980, Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone, the founders of Games Workshop, spoke to a Penguin Books editor about the possibility of writing an introductory guide to role-playing games. Somewhere along the way, the idea arose of creating a solitaire role-playing game in book form with complete rules included. Both of these plans actually ended up coming to fruition in 1982. *Dicing with Dragons*, Ian Livingstone's guide to role-playing (which included a solitaire adventure to demonstrate its concepts) was released by Routledge & Kegan Paul. The book was quite a success, being reprinted by a variety of publishers over the next several years and likely introducing many people to the role-playing hobby. The other 1982 release was of even greater significance, however. What had begun as a proposal called *The Magic*

---

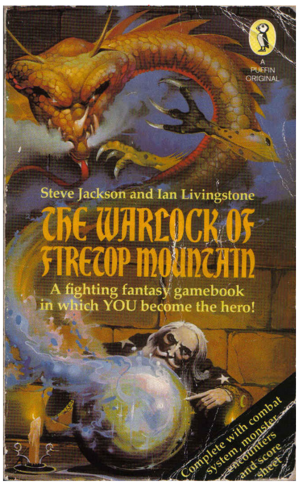
[15] Rick Loomis, e-mail message to author, August 21, 2003.

[16] Daniel Jones and John D. Jorgenson, eds., "Edward Packard" in *Contemporary Authors New Revision Series*, vol. 59 (Detroit: Gale, 1998): 301-5.

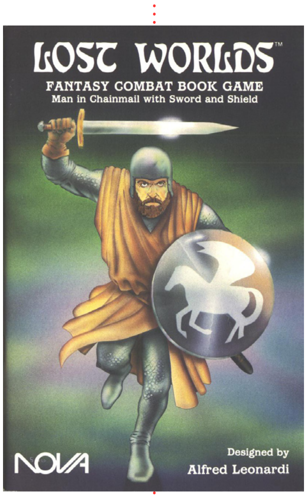
[17] Linda Metzger and Deborah A. Straub, eds., "Raymond A. (Jr.) Montgomery" in *Contemporary Authors New Revision Series*, vol. 16 (Detroit: Gale, 1986): 276-77.

[18] Wizard Books, "Fighting Fantasy History," http://fightingfantasy.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=165&Itemid=37 (accessed December 20, 2012).

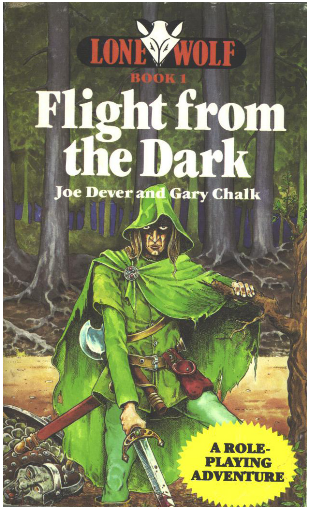
Quest came out as Puffin Books' *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*, the first of the *Fighting Fantasy* books. This gamebook, like a thicker *Choose Your Own Adventure* with simple role-playing rules attached, was likely inspired at least partially by *Tunnels and Trolls*, whose solitaire play is discussed at some length in *Dicing with Dragons*. Regardless of origins, the book sold so well that several additional titles followed in 1983 and every subsequent year until the end of the series in 1995. The books also spawned a series of novels, two different multiplayer role-playing games, and a variety of computer and video games.[18]


A PUFFIN ORIGINAL
Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone
THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN
A fighting fantasy gamebook in which YOU become the hero!
Complete with combat system, monster encounters and score sheet

1980, the year that *Fighting Fantasy*'s seeds were sown, also saw the birth of another kind of gamebook. Alfred Leonardi, a history teacher (and thus possibly influenced by the *TutorText* series), developed a system in which two players, each with a specially programmed, heavily illustrated book, could simulate air combat by choosing actions, cross-referencing numbers and turning pages. This product was an immediate success, and several boxed sets containing matched pairs of books were released. Leonardi also developed the *Lost Worlds* books, begun in 1983, which use a similar mechanism to simulate duels between fantasy characters. *Lost Worlds* offers more flexibility than *Ace of Aces*, however, because while each *Ace of Aces* set provides a matched set of combatants, the *Lost Worlds* books allow battle between any two books, offering an enormous number of possible fights. Both *Ace of Aces* and *Lost Worlds* books were released by a variety of publishers over the years, including Flying Buffalo, which released some *Lost Worlds* adventures with a *Tunnels and Trolls* theme. The games showed enormous staying power over the years, never completely going out of print, though often flirting with obscurity.

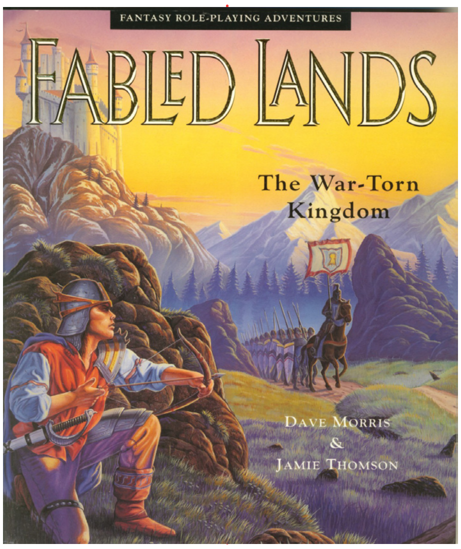

LOST WORLDS™
FANTASY COMBAT BOOK GAME
Man in Chainmail with Sword and Shield
NOVA
Designed by Alfred Leonardi

By the time *Lost Worlds* was beginning to grow in popularity, the overall gamebook explosion was well underway. In America, *Choose Your Own Adventure* had spawned countless imitators, many almost indistinguishable from their source of inspiration, others introducing major or minor twists: educational subjects, TV and movie licenses, puzzlesolving, and so on. In England, *Fighting Fantasy* was beginning to spawn a similar stream of imitations, while at the same time, many of the American releases were being imported. There was just one more major release that would shape the course of gamebook publishing for the remainder of the decade: Joe Dever's *Lone Wolf* books. This series, released by Puffin competitor Beaver starting in 1984. The *Lone Wolf* books were quite similar to *Fighting Fantasy* in appearance, but they were stylistically quite different. While *Fighting Fantasy* books each stood alone, the *Lone Wolf* series introduced the idea of continuity. The books tell a continuing storyline, and readers can carry over their characters and equipment from book to book, growing in strength and abilities as they successfully complete their missions. Like *Fighting Fantasy*, *Lone Wolf* eventually spawned novels and computer games; it also managed to remain in print slightly longer, ending finally in 1998.

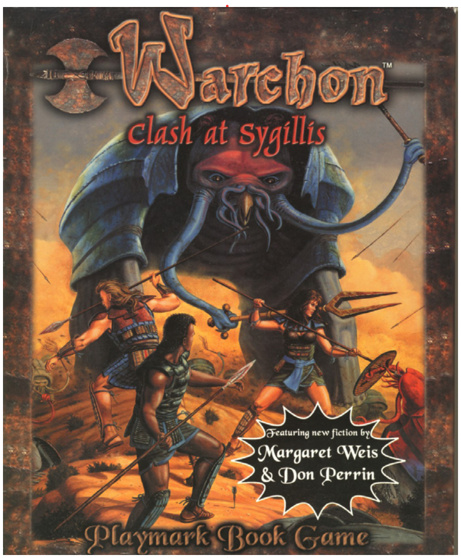


There is little doubt that the eighties werea golden age for gamebooks. All of the basic ideas for gamebook design were in place by the first half of the decade, and the commercial viability of the format was strong enough that authors had quite a few years to experiment with seemingly every possible combination of gamebook characteristics. Unsurprisingly, the United Kingdom generated more *Fighting Fantasy*-style books while America spawned more *Choose Your Own Adventure* imitators, but each country exported a significant percentage of its production to the other. Meanwhile, many books were translated into foreign languages and sold on every inhabited continent of the Earth. In quite a few of these countries, the idea of interactive stories took off all over again, leading to many original gamebooks being written in languages other than English. Unfortunately for English-speaking readers, though, practically none of these foreign adventures were translated into English.

By the start of the nineties, the popularity of gamebooks was clearly declining, and publishers were becoming increasingly wary of publishing them. Not only had the faddish novelty of the concept begun to wear off, but the introduction of computer and video games had also provided a flashier competitor to plain old books. The unfortunate result of this situation is that, while the number of completely pointless commercially-oriented books declined, some truly original gamebook concepts were also unable to come to fruition. Probably the best example of this is the *Fabled Lands* series by Dave Morris and Jamie Thomson, two veterans of Games Workshop and the *Fighting Fantasy* series. The series was planned as twelve volumes, each of which represented a different geographic region and could be used alone but featured links to other books in the series. These links meant that players could travel from book to book in any order they wished, exploring an enormous world in the process. Unfortunately, though, the books were printed in an expensive oversized format, and the publisher only printed six volumes before deciding to abandon the series for cost reasons. Although the first two books were exported to the United States, where they were released as the *Quest* series, this did nothing to get the final six volumes into print. The end result is an intriguing but hopelessly unfinished game, though fans still hold out hope for its eventual completion.



At the end of the nineties, gamebooks were practically gone from the English-speaking world. With the conclusion of *Choose Your Own Adventure* and *Lone Wolf* in 1998, all of the major players had left the scene. Still, even though gamebook production slowed to a trickle, it never completely stopped, and interesting titles continued to be produced. Kim Newman's 1999 stand-alone novel, *Life's Lottery*, was a well-received attempt at using the gamebook format to tell a story that could appeal to readers of contemporary adult fiction. Z-Man Games' *Warchon*, first released in 2002, even managed to introduce a whole new type of gamebook: the *Playmark Book Game*. This format uses bookmarks to represent armies while a programmed book represents geographical regions and the links between them. By placing bookmarks in different parts of the book and then moving them from page to page over time, players can simulate a conflict. Unfortunately, *Warchon* was not successful enough to lead to the publication of the various follow-up titles announced by its publisher, so for now it remains a unique anomaly.



After the relatively dead period of the nineties, the first decade of the 2000's saw something of a gamebook revival. Perhaps the first sign came when Joe Dever gave a group of fans permission to create free, definitive online editions of the *Lone Wolf* books, leading to the formation of Project Aon in 1999. This helped make *Lone Wolf* more internationally available than ever before, and the revised and corrected texts eventually helped facilitate a deluxe hardcover reprint of the series. Even before *Lone Wolf* returned to paper format, *Fighting Fantasy* books began being reprinted in 2002 featuring new covers and an enthusiastic marketing campaign courtesy of their new publisher, Wizard Books. While the series didn't reclaim its original glory, it was successful enough to see several new titles come into print, including the elusive *Bloodbones*, which originally fell victim to the cancellation of the series in the nineties. In America, the *Choose Your Own Adventure* series saw a similar revival, combining reprints of classics with original titles, though many fans were disappointed that Edward Packard was no longer involved in the franchise and his books were not included among the reissues. *Tunnels and Trolls* remained viable, and many fresh solitaire adventures appeared, including several by the game's original creator, Ken St. Andre.

While the recent gamebook reissue movement has been spearheaded by relatively small publishers, even major publishers haven't completely forsaken the format. In addition to the periodic media tie-in gamebooks that never seem to completely go away (*Star Wars*, *Doctor Who*, *Survivor*, etc.), a new subgenre of irreverent American titles designed to appeal to adult readers who grew up with *Choose Your Own Adventure* has appeared.

Gamebooks have also had a lot of success completely outside of the traditional publishing industry. The rise of self-publishing has allowed countless independent authors to release interactive works, and crowdfunding projects like Kickstarter have begun to provide a mechanism for gathering funds to improve the quality of these productions. E-readers, tablet computers and smart phones have also provided a new medium for interactive entertainment, and many classic titles, as well as a handful of new ones by authors old and new, are now showing up in "app" format. In one instance, the success of a *Fabled Lands* app even helped fuel the reprint of some of the physical books (though the second half of the series still remains elusive).

While it seems unlikely that gamebooks will ever return to the prominence they briefly held in the eighties, it is clear that they are far from being a dead format, and they continue to evolve with the times. Whether on paper or on screens, they are here to stay for the foreseeable future.

FF

Sometimes, Two Dice, a Pencil and an Eraser are NOT All You Need

The marriage of story and strategy. How the gamebook forged its identity.

by Stuart Lloyd

Think about the last gamebook you played. What did you need to play it? You probably needed a six sided die or two as well as a pencil to note down a few stats and some items and an eraser to delete them once they had been used. Or you could have read one of those *Choose Your Own Adventure* books where you didn't need to note anything down or roll any dice.

That may be the case for the majority of you, but over the years there have been a whole plethora of game systems for gamebooks ranging from using full RPG systems to using playing cards to writing code to complete the gamebook. This article will chart how authors have pushed the boundaries of gamebook systems and what we can expect in the future.

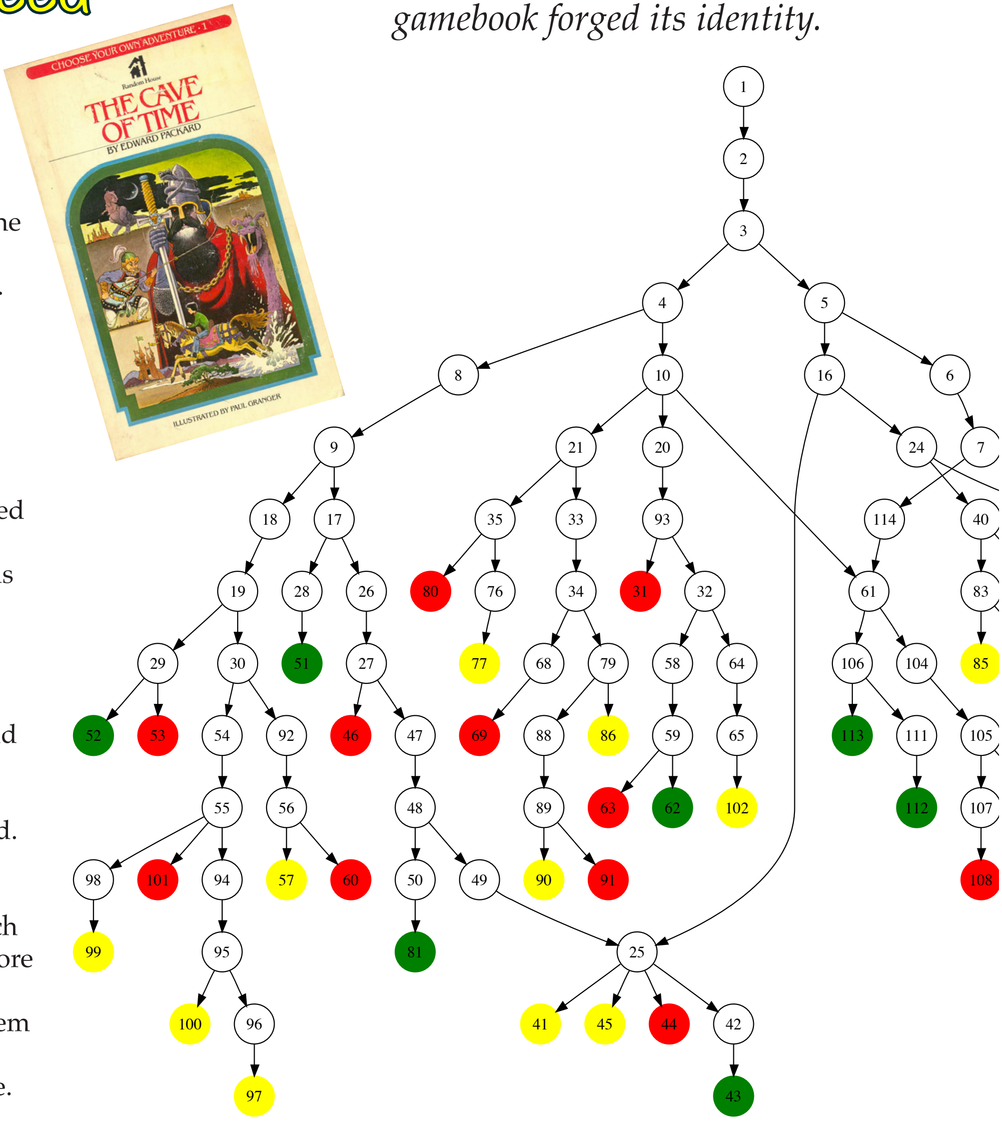
It's taken a while for gamebooks, a hybrid art form, to find a happy medium between the extremes of the pure solo game and the interactive story that lacks any game elements.

The gamebook started to emerge in the seventies as one of the two extremes between game and book. In 1976, the RPG *Tunnels and Trolls* produced *Buffalo Castle* by Rick Loomis, a solo adventure which used the *Tunnels and Trolls* game system. The premise was quite basic – it was a classic dungeon crawl where you would explore a castle filled with a menagerie of strange monsters and try to grab some treasure; the book was your eyes and ears instead of a referee. On the other end of the game/book spectrum, we had *Sugarcane Island* by Edward Packard. This book was written in 1969 and first published in 1976 as number 1 in the *Adventures of You* series, which was the progenitor for the much more famous *Choose Your Own Adventure* series. This book had no game system and based success purely on your choices rather than on a roll of a die.

These two styles of producing gamebooks worked very well, but the game systems in both of them were not thought out specifically for the concept of a solo game in book form. *Buffalo Castle* put an unmodified RPG system into a book and *Choose Your Own Adventure* did not use a game system at all, opting for a pure interactive fiction approach.

Simply applying an RPG system to a gamebook presented a few difficulties. RPG systems were designed with many options for character development and a referee to respond to the actions of players. However, it is impossible for a gamebook to accommodate all of the class abilities that the system has to offer and actions that the player would want their character to come up with. Indeed, *Buffalo Castle* advised the players that only warriors should enter (leaving out magic using classes).

On the other hand, pure interactive fiction was not pushing the concept of the gamebook to its full potential, neglecting the game side of things and sometimes offering choices that could lead to illogical and unexpected consequences which, if they led to a bad ending, would be a source of frustration for the player. Also, without a system to keep any kind of score or track the state of your character, such as codewords, these systemless gamebooks could not make your character's early choices have any effect on later choices without creating a whole new path.



SVG flow diagrams: Simon Osborne © 2012 Used with permission.

The result of this was that the paths in many *Choose Your Own Adventure* gamebooks were divergent but short, allowing the reader to have multiple endings but none of them interlinked.

This is in contrast to gamebooks that did track your progress with items and codewords such as *Moonrunner*, which allowed players to explore several more locations and situations but also allowed them to experience the environment differently depending on what skills, items or codewords the character had. This enabled the player to explore more of the book.

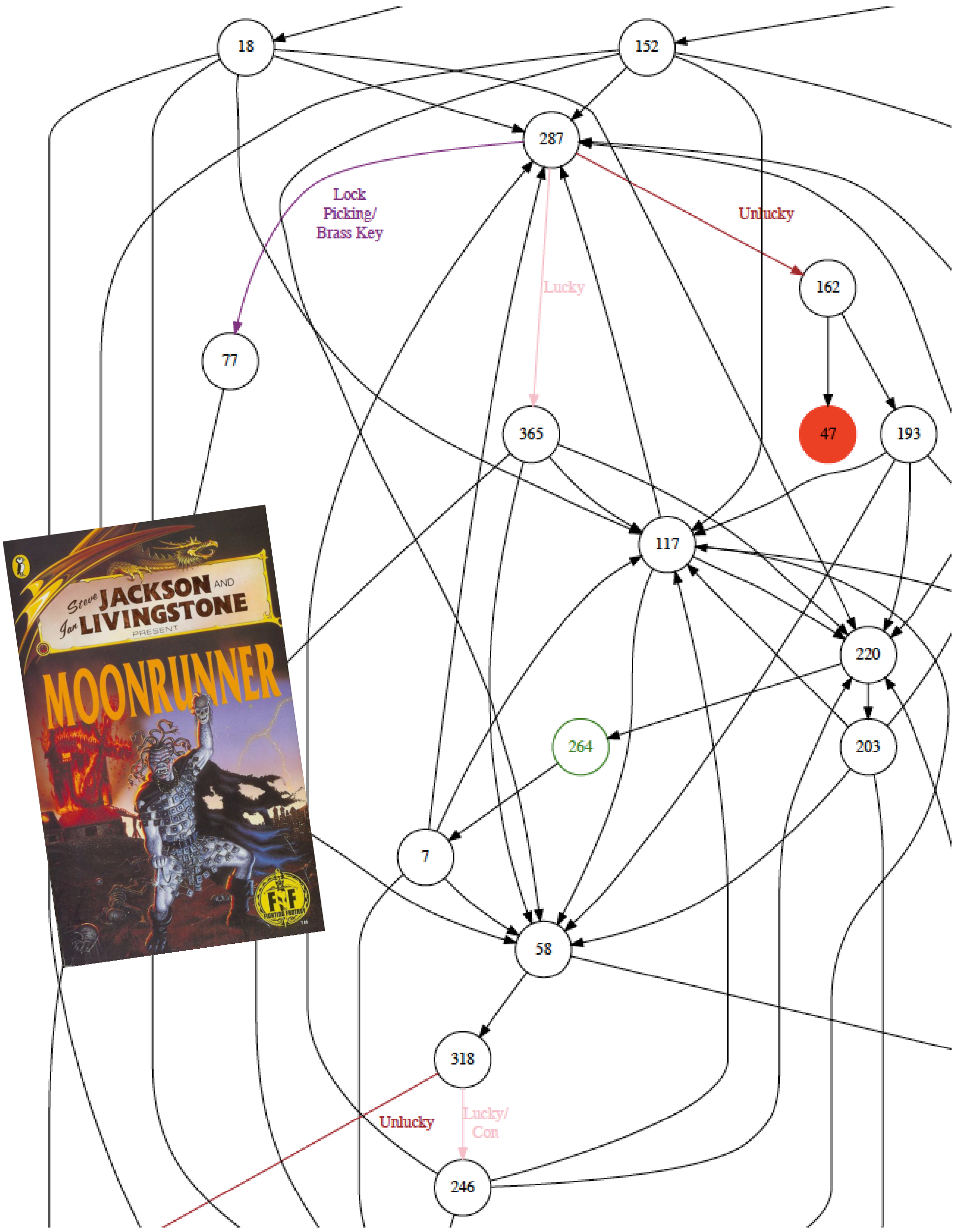
The *Fabled Lands* series went even further and created a huge open ended world for the player to explore. Whilst this meant that there was never a proper ending, it also meant that the player had a huge number of options for what they wanted to do. They could go on quests to slay monsters or just buy a boat and trade commodities between different cities. The player could help a usurper or hinder them in order to return the king to his rightful throne. They could visit each area as many times as they wanted and this was accounted for in the books. Actions you took or items you collected in one area may have an effect in another area, possibly in another country. This type of layout provided a unique playing experience at the expense of narrative and definite story that you would find in a *Choose Your Own Adventure* gamebook.

The birth of *Fighting Fantasy* in 1982 with *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* was a beginning of gamebooks finding their new identity. Like *Buffalo Castle*, it was a dungeon crawl with very little plot, but the game system was quick, simple and versatile, requiring only two six sided dice and three stats. The system was also tailor made for the gamebook, meaning that your character would use all of their stats and also not have to worry that those class features that they had would not apply.

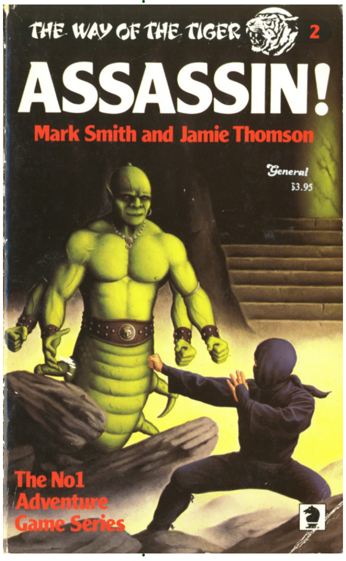
It made sense for gamebooks to have a limited number of stats and a simple game system as opposed to a full RPG system – the limited world that they offered readers in their paragraphs could only work with a few rules. In some cases, the simplicity sacrificed player options when it came to character creation but gamebooks soon worked out ways of creating customisable characters in a quick and simple way. Many, such as the *Lone Wolf* series, allowed players to choose a number of skills from a list in order to customize their characters. Other books such as the *Fabled Lands* series had a class system which determined the starting character's stats and also opened up certain areas of the book to them. For example, warriors were able to gain greater reward for killing the black knight in *The War Torn Kingdom*.

Simple systems had other flaws. For example, in the *Fighting Fantasy* system, having a SKILL that was lower than your opponent's SKILL, even by 1 point, would make combat a lot more difficult. If your SKILL was lower than your opponent's by 3 then you would have a 15% chance of winning an attack round. Given that you would probably have to win 4~5 attack rounds to kill an opponent, chances are that you would lose.

This problem was solved in many ways. The *Virtual Reality* series had an even simpler system that did not use dice at all. You would lose health points in combat and the amount depended on which combat skills you had. Other gamebooks made their systems slightly more complicated in order to offset the balance problem. The *Lone Wolf* books used a random number chart with numbers from 0~9 (essentially a 10 sided die) to determine random outcomes. Combat was resolved by picking a random



number and referring to a table to determine how much damage was dealt to both Lone Wolf and the opponent. Despite the increased complexity, this meant that combat could be balanced so that Lone Wolf had a fighting chance against stronger opponents.

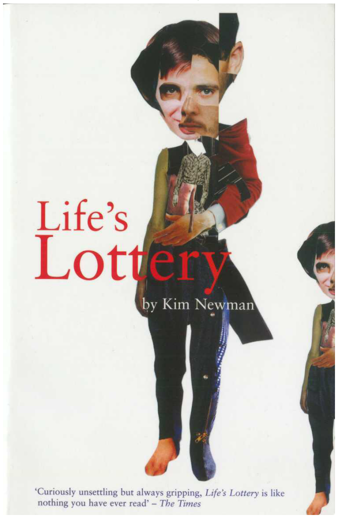

THE WAY OF THE TIGER 2
ASSASSIN!
Mark Smith and Jamie Thomson
General $3.95
The No1 Adventure Game Series

The Way of the Tiger series introduced options into its combat. You could choose to punch, kick or throw your opponent and each tactic would have its advantages and disadvantages against each opponent. You also had opportunities to improve your skills and increase your chances to hit your opponents or increase the damage you dealt with inner force. All of these options helped offset the problems created if your character had to make some improbable dice rolls to win. Some gamebooks turned combat into a puzzle rather than relying on dice rolls. *The Quest for the Auburn Pelt* had an innovative use of combat where there was a list of actions. You were told which actions your opponent would take each round and you could choose which action you wanted to take. Your action limited which actions you could take in the next round, however. You had to work out the best sequence of actions in order to kill your opponents.

This slightly higher level of complexity also allowed the player to advance their character between books by choosing more skills for them or increasing their stats. Dice and random number tables are not the only systems that have been used. The *Legends of Skyfall* gamebook series used an innovative method that involved flipping coins. Kim Newman's *Life's Lottery* used a deck of playing cards for one option. Jake Care has also used playing cards for a combat system in *Battle of Bamajeda*. David Walter's Windhammer entry, *Day of Dissonance*, requires the player to hold their breath to prevent them losing health points. The *Tangled Tales* series involved you punching a card into a machine based on your choices and the machine would tell you which card to use next.

Some gamebooks incorporated other tactical elements. For example, *Grailquest 3: Gateway of Doom* had a dungeon map where you tracked how far your character could travel in order to work out where you might get attacked by wandering monsters. Other gamebooks, such as *Bloodsword*, used tactical maps in their combat system although Dave Morris has recently revealed that he did not like this idea very much.

As time went on, gamebooks pulled in more methods to challenge and confound their reasons. Some gamebooks were pure puzzles, such as the *5 Minute Mystery* books where the player has to read a story very carefully in order to work out who had perpetrated some crime. This 'guess the ending' format harks back to the 1920s with the Ellery Queen series. This did not require choices in text but instead involved making decisions about the information available. Authors made use of the numbered paragraphs by including puzzles and riddles which had numbers as answers. Possessing an item meant that you had to add a certain number to a paragraph or turn to a new number to use the item rather than having the book ask you 'Do you have item x?' (a question which easily encouraged cheating). They also included a way of converting words to numbers. Some gamebooks also used illustrations as challenges or solutions to problems. Players could work out who a werewolf was (*Howl of the Werewolf*), find mystical white cubes or face puzzles in the illustrations of gamebooks. Gamebook illustrations also included maps with numbered sections for each location.


Life's Lottery
by Kim Newman
'Curiously unsettling but always gripping, Life's Lottery is like nothing you have ever read' – The Times

In some gamebooks, there were paragraphs that were unreachable by instructions in the text. The *Cretan Chronicles* gamebooks allowed you to 'take a hint' by adding a number to marked paragraphs. This had to be done sparingly however, as the consequences were not always positive. The *Choices* series by J.P. Barnett allows the player to take hidden choices. In his example, if you find a torch, it may also have the instruction +10. This means that if you come across a paragraph where you think using the torch is appropriate, you add 10 to the number and turn to the new number. This requires more thought and careful reading than just following instructions stating 'If you have a torch, turn to x' and it also means that the routes are not completely obvious to the player upon first play through. This system was also used by Jake Care in his Windhammer entry *Emancipation* and infamously in *Creature of Havoc* where, if you found a pendant, you were told to add a number to a paragraph upon reading a certain phrase. Except, in order to win, you also had to add this number to a paragraph that did not contain this phrase. This was either an error or an ingenious initiative test.

The hidden paragraph option was taken to extreme lengths with the *Choose Your Own Adventure* book *Inside UFO 54-40* by Edward Packard where the winning paragraph was literally unreachable by any means other than flicking through the book to find it. The author knew this as the winning paragraph alludes to them 'not making any choice or following any direction to get here'. Packard's device is one of the most memorable moments of the *Choose Your Own Adventure* series and even inspired a tribute in Jason Shiga's interactive comic, *Meanwhile....*

If all gamebooks used all of the tools available to them then they could become quite complicated, but that does not necessarily make for a good gamebook. For example, the *Virtual Reality* series used a very simple diceless system (one stat – health, a selection of skills and a requirement for inventory management), but the series contained some of the best gamebooks ever written thanks to elegant designs and good incorporation of system skills with the storyline.

This new media of gamebooks gave rise to new strategies of beating them. After opening a door that leads to immediate demise, it would be understandable to keep your fingers in the pages and flick back if you wanted a better result. Some authors attempted to make the books harder for cheaters by having secret paragraphs and by making the random elements more difficult. This worked with variable success.

Players are going to read the paragraphs that they're not supposed to and flick through the book for a hidden paragraph, and the author is not available to stop them. Adding 'anti cheating' systems such as only making success possible if you fail an ability check (*Black Vein Prophecy*), having to fight difficult combats (*Knights of Doom*) and doing some tedious letter to number calculations (*Island of the Undead*) only increased frustration and made cheating more prevalent.

In the nineties, Jonathan Green's *Fighting Fantasy* books (*Spellbreaker*, *Knights of Doom* and *Curse of the Mummy*) followed this kind of vein with his later books (*Stormslayer*, *Howl of the Werewolf* and *Night of the Necromancer*) having success rely on your choices rather than dice rolls. Jonathan did this because his primary purpose was to entertain, and he acknowledged that cheaters would cheat anyway. *Bloodbones* is an interesting intermediate, having being written at the time he was writing the first group of books but being released several years later, possibly after some editing. This means that *Bloodbones* is hard, but possible to win without cheating.

Some gamebook authors decided that they didn't want to try to beat one player any more and decided that they wanted to beat several instead. Dave Morris's *Blood Sword* series allowed you to pit four characters against the challenges of the book in order to complete it. You could play all four yourself or you could play with friends. He later used this method when he wrote his *Heroquest* gamebooks.

Some authors went even further and pitted you against one of your friends instead of the book. This was done with *Clash of the Princes* by Andrew Chapman and Martin Allen, Joe Dever's *Combat Heroes* series and the *Duelmaster* series by Mark Smith and Jamie Thomson. These books incorporated some of the most innovative and complex systems in order to keep track of both players. *Clash of the Princes* incorporated a STATUS score in order to indicate where you were in relation to your brother. *Duelmaster 3: The Shattered Realm* took into account whether you and your opponent were going to the same realm and had you both role playing against each other before moving to part 2 of the game where you fought a mass battle using board game elements and the *Combat Heroes* series had you and a friend moving around a fully-illustrated dungeon or flying in airships trying to kill each other. Some of these ideas worked and some were too complex to work well. The *Lost Worlds* and *Ace of Aces* books also pitted you against a friend by having you shout out numbers or use cards in combat.

Since we've been able to play games on computers, people have tried to write interactive fiction and gamebook-like programs. One of the most innovative marriages of gamebook and computer was the *Arcade Explorers* series where your choices prompted you to type a certain line of code into a computer. Once you had competed the gamebook, you were able to play a computer game that was different depending on the choices that you had made. The *Dragonquest* gamebooks attempted to reconstruct the Nintendo RPG series in gamebook form in Japan (a small taste of this was available in English in a *Nintendo Power* magazine).

In the twenty first century, computers have had their influence on gamebooks with the MMORPG inspired *Destiny Quest*. This gamebook has created a system where you choose a location to explore from a map and face an opponent. The book is full of magical items and abilities so that you can create a unique hero, improve them and finally face the legion itself and its Eldritch abomination leader.

Gamebooks have also gone digital themselves, allowing them to expand the range even more. Digital gamebooks can be hyperlinked allowing the player to quickly move from one page to another. Other digital gamebook series have gone further. The *Gamebook Adventures* series has created excellent gamebook apps where you can roll many digital dice and be able to keep track of a lot more equipment and codewords as it is done digitally. This allows a more complex game system to be incorporated which offers more choice and reduces the damaging effect of one unfair die roll while keeping the playing experience simple and expedient. However, *Gamebook Adventures* have stayed true to the good old traditions of gamebook playing by allowing players to digitally cheat to win combats and place 'bookmarks' in certain places just in case you die in the next paragraph.

Despite gamebooks being able to occupy both extremes of the game and book spectrum, every point in between and a few places within the puzzle and computer game area, there is no one true mixture of game and book that all gamebooks should have. Every ratio of game to book has its advantages and disadvantages, its supporters and decriers. This just demonstrates what a versatile medium the gamebook is. Gamebooks are still going strong after thirty years and due to the fact that they can incorporate or be incorporated into almost any medium, it looks like we will still have them for many years to come.

FF

Art: Lise Rafalli © 2012 Used with permission.

Orb is Coming FULL CIRCLE

The world of Orb may be familiar to readers of *Fighting Fantasy* from the book *Talisman of Death* and to the wider world of gamebook fans as the setting of the *Way of the Tiger* series. It was a setting first created by Mark Smith when he was still at school in Brighton in 1976, and it came to be one of the most detailed and enduring worlds of its time... and it is about to make a big comeback (but more on that later).

Mark Smith originally designed Orb as the backdrop for a *Dungeons & Dragons* campaign that he ran whilst in secondary school. Amongst the gaming group was Jamie Thomson, and it was many years later through this key contact that Orb got its chance to be the adventure setting that so many others would enjoy.

Following the early success of *Fighting Fantasy* books, the hunt was quickly on for new writers to add to the series. Jamie Thomson was well placed to answer the call, working for Ian Livingstone as assistant editor at *White Dwarf* magazine. Together with Mark Smith, he created the pitch for a book called *Talisman of Death*.

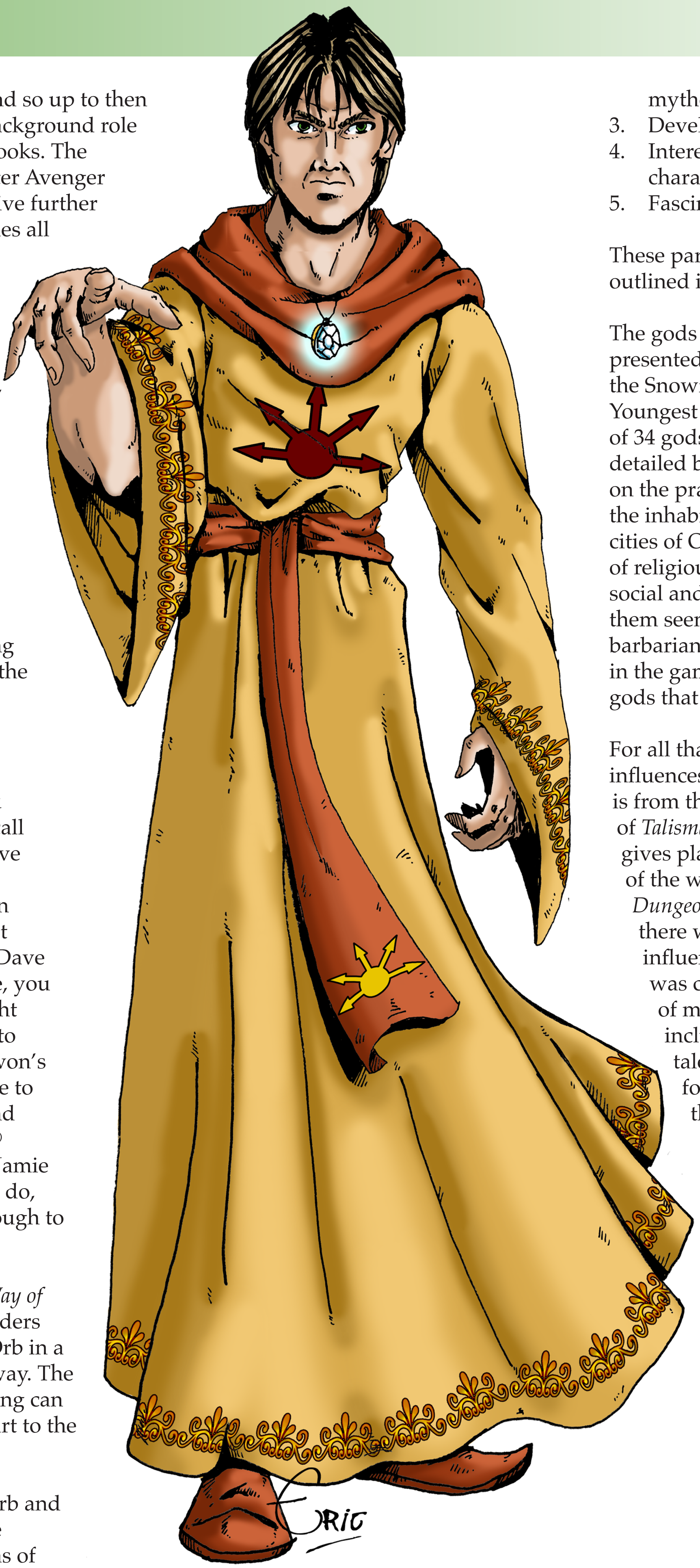
Puffin first published the book in late 1984 as the eleventh in the series of burgeoning *Fighting Fantasy* books. At the time it was only the second *Fighting Fantasy* book not written by either Steve Jackson or Livingstone (the first being *Scorpion Swamp*), and was the first set entirely in a fantasy world that was not Titan, which was gradually taking shape through each new book release.

By contrast, right from its first appearance Orb was a richly detailed and evocative world, already mapped and detailed, and with a range of memorable characters such as Tyutchev, Cassandra and Thaum. Artist Peter Andrew Jones, under direction from the authors, created one of the most striking covers of the *Fighting Fantasy* series containing Death himself, which Thomson cites as one of his favourite gamebook covers. *Talisman of Death* remained a staple of the *Fighting Fantasy* series, always popular with the fans, and was republished in 2006 by Wizard Books, and was released in digital format by Laughing Jackal in 2011.

In an interview, Thomson said he was not surprised by the success of *Talisman of Death*, as *Fighting Fantasy* was already a 'huge craze' by the time they wrote it. He also stated that this book was a real primer for the *Way of the Tiger* series, which was to be some of the best work he and Mark Smith ever did.

Avenger!, the first *Way of the Tiger* book, followed in 1985, and again was set in the world of Orb. This time the hero played the part of a ninja on a quest of vengeance against potent adversaries, and the gamebook had a unique combat system involving named throws, kicks and punches. Ninja had previously only featured briefly in *Fighting Fantasy* in *Deathtrap*

DAVID WALTERS **sets out to explain the current state of the fantasy lands of Orb, a world that readers first encountered in *Talisman of Death*...**



Art: Eric Chaussin © 2012 Used with permission.

Dungeon (1984), and so up to then had only a very background role in popular gamebooks. The ninja main character Avenger was to feature in five further *Way of the Tiger* titles all continuing the epic storyline: *Assassin!* (1985), *Usurper!* (1985), *Overlord!* (1986), *Warbringer!* (1986), and *Inferno!* (1987). In later books, Smith and Thomson were to make ruling a city (*Overlord!*) and wargaming (*Warbringer!*) possible in a gamebook, pushing the boundaries of the genre.

Even to this day fans still clamour for a seventh book to the series, and call for a petition to save Avenger from his precarious position within the Rift (not least from author Dave Morris). If, like me, you want to lend weight to this expedition to the Rift to save Kwon's finest ninja, be sure to log in to twitter and tweet about it to @thegreatdirk (aka Jamie Thomson) – if you do, please be kind enough to follow him too.

Throughout the *Way of the Tiger* books readers were exposed to Orb in a more exhaustive way. The success of the setting can be attributed in part to the following reasons:

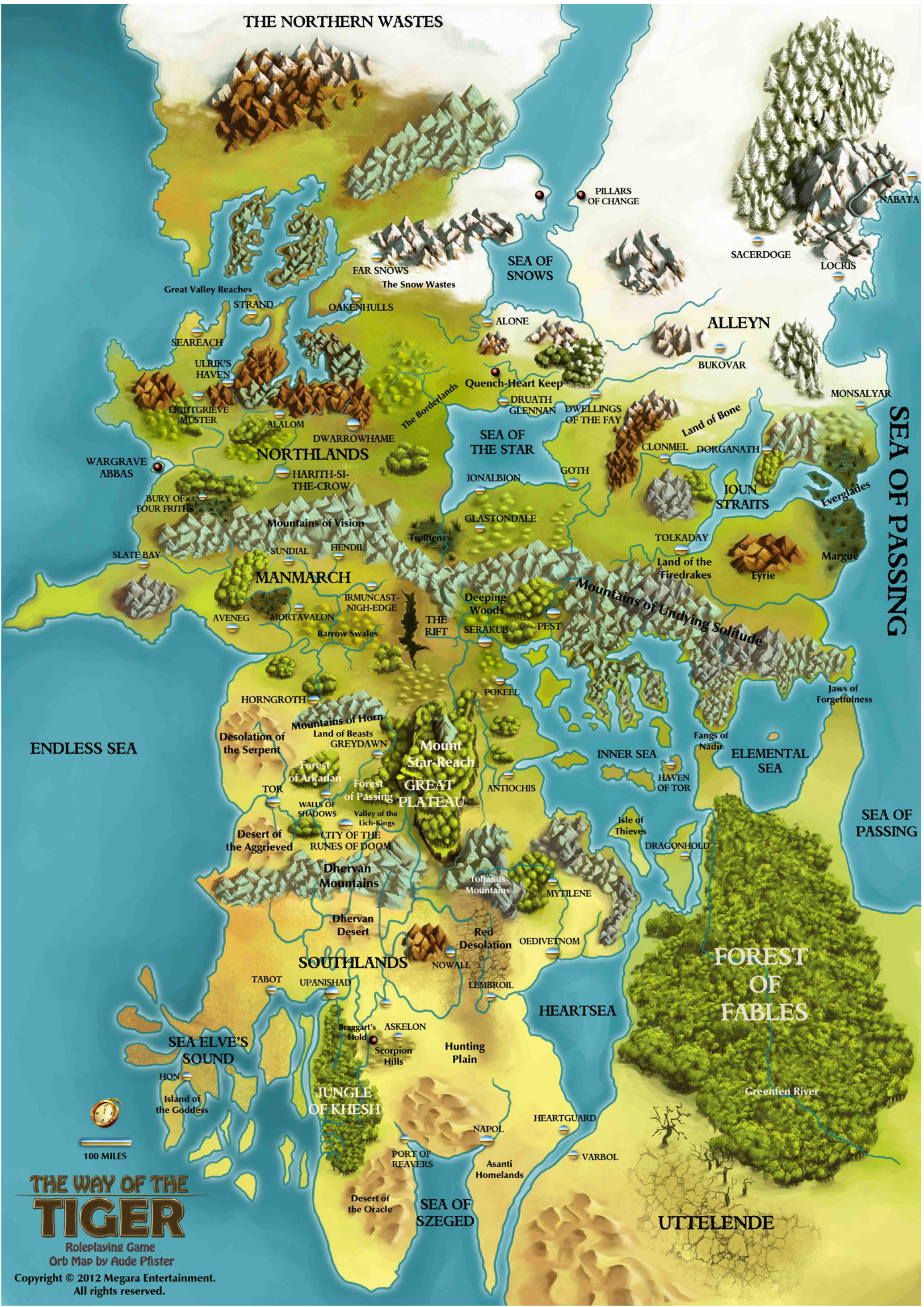
1. The gods of Orb and their influence
2. A broad canvas of mythology
3. Developed far-eastern references
4. Interesting and believable characters
5. Fascinating places

These particular facets of Orb will be outlined in turn below.

The gods of Orb were descriptively presented, such as the god Time, the Snowfather, Eldest Father, and Youngest Son. There was a pantheon of 34 gods, and they were not only detailed but had a direct influence on the practises and lifestyles of the inhabitants of Orb. This led the cities of Orb to have a rich palette of religious colour, and they held a social and political tension that made them seem more real. Even simple barbarians or other ninja encountered in the gamebooks had allegiance to gods that dominated their lives.

For all that Orb is known for Japanese influences through *Way of the Tiger*, it is from the original Orb experience of *Talisman of Death* that perhaps gives players a hint of the true roots of the world. In Smith's original *Dungeons & Dragons* Orb campaign, there were next to no far-eastern influences, and instead the world was composed of a rich tapestry of mythological influences including Tolkien, Nordic tales and Eastern European folklore. The blending of these (and other) influences led to a unique and rich fantasy world, where the influences of ninja and samurai were only added in later to fill out the story of *Way of the Tiger*. You only have to think back to Greyguilds in *Talisman of Death* to get an

Magician of Béatan


THE NORTHERN WASTES
PILLARS OF CHANGE
NABATA
SEA OF SNOWS
SACERDOGE
LOCRIS
FAR SNOWS
The Snow Wastes
Great Valley Reaches
STRAND
OAKENHULLS
ALONE
ALLEYN
SEAREACH
ULRIK'S HAVEN
BUKOVAR
Quench-Heart Keep
The Borderlands
DRUATH GLENNAN
DWELLINGS OF THE FAY
MONSALYAR
LIGHTGRIEVE MUSTER
ALALOM
DWARROWHAME
SEA OF THE STAR
Land of Bone
CLONMEL
DORGANATH
SEA OF PASSING
WARGRAVE ABBAS
NORTHLANDS
HARITH-SI-THE-CROW
GOTH
IONALBION
IOUN STRAITS
Everglades
BURY OF FOUR FRITHS
Mountains of Vision
GLASTONDALE
Trollfens
TOLKADAY
SLATE BAY
SUNDIAL
FIENDIL
Land of the Firedrakes
Margue
Eyrie
MANMARCH
IRMUNCAST-NIGH-EDGE
Deeping Woods
Mountains of Undying Solitude
AVENEG
MORTAVALON
THE RIFT
SERAKUB
PEST
Barrow Swales
POKEEL
Jaws of Forgetfulness
HORNGROTH
Mountains of Horn
Land of Beasts
GREYDAWN
Desolation of the Serpent
ENDLESS SEA
Mount Star-Reach
Fangs of Nadir
INNER SEA
ELEMENTAL SEA
Forest of Arkadan
TOR
Forest of Passing
GREAT PLATEAU
ANTIOCHIS
HAVEN OF TOR
WALLS OF SHADOWS
Valley of the Lich-Kings
SEA OF PASSING
Isle of Thieves
Desert of the Aggrieved
CITY OF THE RUNES OF DOOM
DRAGONHOLD
Dhervan Mountains
Toljanus Mountains
MYTILENE
Dhervan Desert
Red Desolation
OEDIVETNOM
FOREST OF FABLES
SOUTHLANDS
NOWALL
TABOT
UPANISHAD
LEMBROIL
HEARTSEA
SEA ELVE'S SOUND
Braggart's Hold
ASKELON
Scorpion Hills
Hunting Plain
HON
Island of the Goddess
JUNGLE OF KHESH
Greenfen River
NAPOL
HEARTGUARD
100 MILES
PORT OF REAVERS
VARBOL
Asanti Homelands
THE WAY OF THE TIGER
Desert of the Oracle
SEA OF SZEGED
UTTELENDE
Roleplaying Game
Orb Map by Aude Pfister
Copyright © 2012 Megara Entertainment.
All rights reserved.

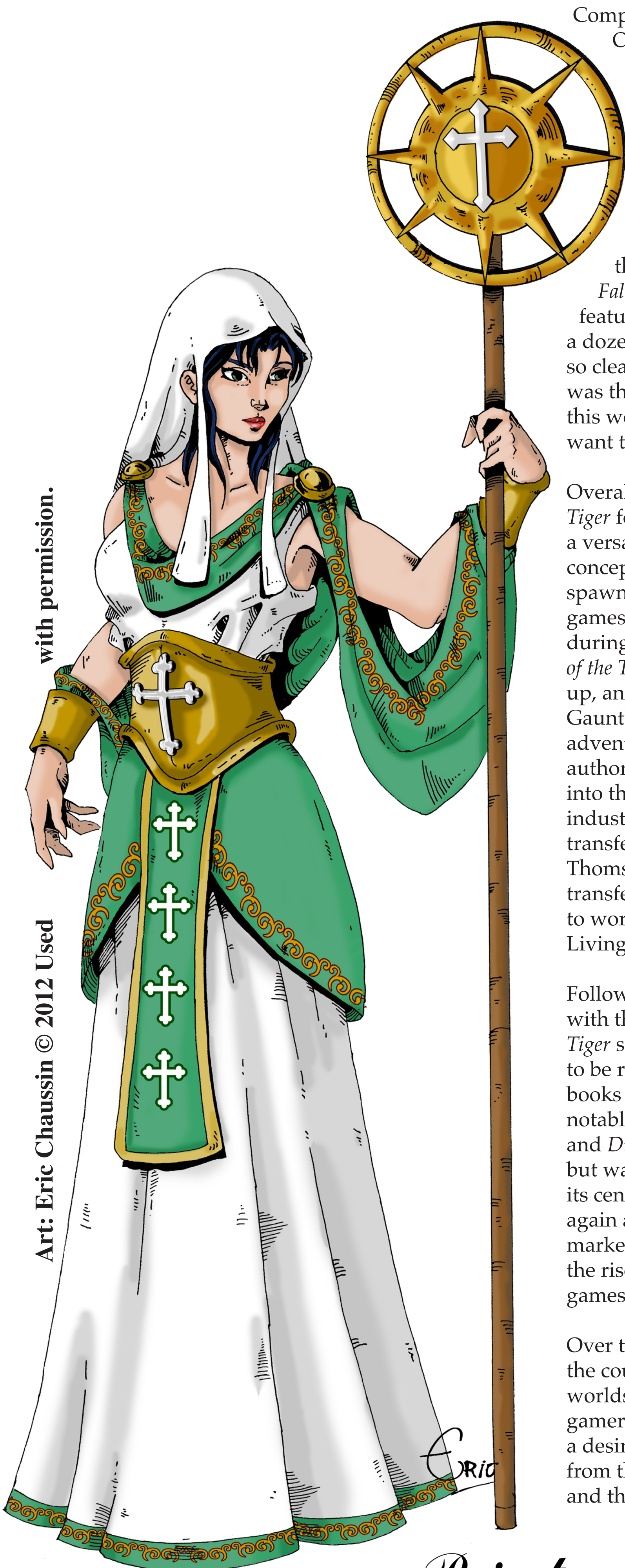
Art: Aude Pfister © 2012 Used with permission.

idea of the uniqueness of Orb, and that was only one city within that world. The astute reader of Orb gamebooks will also see glimpses of a deep history in Orb throughout the books, from Lovecraftian Old Ones (first hinted at in *Talisman of Death* upon meeting Thaum, and later expanded in *Way of the Tiger*), to the time when the pantheon of gods walked the earth to do battle, to the time of snows: Orb history is a deep and largely uncharted treasure trove of genres and ideas.

For all the uniqueness of the original version of Orb, it was in transplanting a ninja story into it that added even more colour to an already vivid world. In the 1980s, most mythology in gamebooks was highly westernised. *Way of the Tiger* introduced a genuinely authentic eastern feeling by having a ninja main character with detailed training, skills and equipment, factors that showed the wealth of background research undertaken by the writers. In addition, other eastern influences such as samurai and Japanese monsters (e.g. O-Bakemono) made their way into the world. The authors also wrote the 20th *Fighting Fantasy* book in 1986 called *Sword of the Samurai*, and although it was not set on Orb it again showed their ability to write powerful gamebooks with a strong eastern flavour.

The characters in Orb had a great sense of depth and believability to them, particularly when compared with more standard characters encountered in other gamebooks. Few characters in Gamebooks had as detailed a background as Avenger, and even incidental characters in the series were interesting enough to advise you on how to run a complex city or on the best strategy to win a battle in a way that remained consistent with the character's personality. The great characters in Orb are largely attributable to the fact that the characters had a considerable background already fleshed out by Smith and Thomson who had encountered them in their years of role playing in Orb – with many of the major characters of the books (such as Tyutchev and Cassandra) previously having been played by Smith's school friends. The characters were extremely vivid, from Yaemon Grandmaster of Flame, Order of the Scarlet Mantis, to the beautiful Foxglove, enchantress and head of the secret informers Order of the Yellow Lotus. For gamebook readers, it felt as if all the characters had a life long before the first page of the book was ever turned.

Orb also has a long list of fascinating places. The Rift is a dark scar in the centre of the land, also known as the Bowels of Orb, where the forces of evil gather to scheme under the guidance of Old Ones and the horrific giant spider the Black Widow. The Spires of Foreshadowing is a city in the Manmarch which is ruled by Dom the Prescient, who can glimpse the destiny of those who visit him, and who worships the goddess Fate. The City of the Runes of Doom is ruled by the Fleshless King, and home to the great Cathedral of Death, and a sylph is imprisoned in a keystone to one of the city gates, giving a doleful cry whenever the king's Spectral


Art: Eric Chaussin © 2012 Used with permission.

Priestess of Illustra

Company rides out. Orb's locations are always memorable and intriguing, but always coherent with the wider world they are set in. Including the *Duelmaster* and *Falcon* series, Orb features in more than a dozen gamebooks, so clearly the appetite was there to explore this world, and fans still want to see more of Orb.

Overall, *Way of the Tiger* found itself to be a versatile and popular concept, and even spawned two computer games that were released during the 1980s (*Way of the Tiger*, a beat-em-up, and *Avenger*, a Gauntlet-style arcade adventure). Indeed the authors were to move into the computer games industry to use their transferable skills, with Thomson eventually transferring to Eidos to work again for Ian Livingstone.

Following their success with the *Way of the Tiger* series, Orb was to be revisited in other books by the authors, notably in their *Falcon* and *Duelmaster* series, but was never to regain its central prominence again as the gamebook market diminished with the rise of computer games.

Over time, despite the countless fantasy worlds available, many gamers have expressed a desire to see more from the world of Orb – and they are only now starting to get that chance, along with newcomers to the series. Firstly, Fabled Lands LLP (a company owned by Morris and Thomson) has agreed to a deal with an as yet unnamed major international publisher to release books from their gamebook backlist. This will include the *Way of the Tiger* series in both printed and eBook format, currently with *Avenger!* scheduled for April 2013 and the sequel *Assassin!* to follow. Also in the pipeline is a new wild-west themed gamebook from Thomson.

Also, Megara Entertainment are currently producing a *Way of the Tiger* pen and paper role-playing game, due in 2013, which will allow players to at last freely explore Orb. It will be fully in colour, more than two hundred pages long and can be pre-ordered off their website www.megara-entertainment.com including the option of having it signed by the authors. On that website there are also various *Way of the Tiger* themed gifts for purchase including a new map of Orb and T-shirts containing unique artwork from the forthcoming book. There are also newly created discussion forums on *Way of the Tiger* created there too. The plan is to have a Kickstarter entry in early 2013 to offer the rulebook, a new hand-drawn map (described by Mark Smith as 'really beautiful') and Orb-specific products related to *Way of the Tiger*.

Dave Morris to this day cites as his greatest role-playing regret that he never got to play in Smith's Orb campaign, and others who did have that privilege maintain it was the best RPG they have played.

There is even the prospect that one day Mark Smith will find time to write his much-pondered series of novels set in Orb, to more fully explore the world he created more than thirty years ago. These developments mean that the world of Orb is making a comeback into the mainstream of fantasy, and as many gamebook fans would tell you, it is long overdue.

The artwork reproduced here is for the forthcoming Way of the Tiger *RPG produced by Megara Entertainment.*

FF

AELOUS RAVEN AND THE

by IAN BROCKLEHURST
Illustrated by Angela Salamaliki © 2012

CHAPTER FIVE

The Sea Witch's right-hand index finger circled slightly as she motioned for the travelers to follow her. She crossed the carpeted floor effortlessly as though movement was no exertion. Her left-hand waved towards the tapestry covering the wall in front of her and it disappeared, revealing an adjoining room. The room was about twelve square feet and its three walls had dozens of alcoves cut into them; within each alcove sat a human-head sized crystal ball.

'Magic,' whispered Hacksaw to Orchid in Elvish 'powerful magic.'

'Indeed,' answered the Sea Witch. 'You know I'm the greatest witch that has ever lived and this room is a testament to my legacy.'

'What's with the crystal balls?' asked Conar as he looked closely at one, which reflected his face back at him.

'Memories.'

'Of what?'

'Of me.'

Raven placed his hand on a crystal ball, it felt very cold and yet at the same time he was sure he could feel something else – something elusive. 'Your memories are stored in these crystals?'

'Yes, these crystals come from the Icefinger Mountains and are perfect for my needs. I brought them here years ago'

'Why would you need to put your memories into a crystal ball? Noakes put his question to the Sea Witch directly.

'Ah,' smiled Cove, 'well you see, young man that when a young lady reaches a certain age her mind just can't keep every memory in there. So I store them here freeing up space to add new memories.' She spun around on her heel and her arms waved at all the crystal balls present. 'I have lived so many lifetimes that if I didn't store my memories then they would be lost.'

'How old are you?' interrupted Orchid

'Old, Amazon very old. I have seen civilization on Titan ebb and flow over the millennia that I have witnessed the sunrise and sunset.'

Hacksaw shook his head in disbelief and whispered an ancient Elvish ward of protection. 'You said you have had many names?'

The Sea Witch nodded.

'Io of the Silent Falls.'

'Yes.'

Orchid looked towards her trusty Black Elf companion for more information.

'There is a legend amongst the Elves that goes back perhaps two thousand years to a time when a great darkness had befallen Titan and a human witch battled the darkness alongside the greatest Elven mages of that time. Her name was Io and she came from a village called Silent Falls and it was said that she had been cursed with immortality.'

'Now, then Black Elf' cooed the Sea Witch. 'I haven't gone by that name in a very long time.'

Orchid glared defiantly at Cove. 'I don't care what your name is, Witch. Why did your harpies abduct the child from our ship?'

'To answer that you must look at what lies in this particular crystal ball.' The Sea Witch stopped pirouetting around the adventurers and pointed at a crystal ball that looked no different to all the others present. 'This just happens to hold some of my oldest memories.'

'Do we have a choice here?' asked Raven, 'I mean do we really need to see what happened to you?'

'I think if you see what happened then, you will understand the position I find myself in now and why I have to do certain things however unpleasant they may be.'

Delfina Cove clicked her fingers and a blinding light filled the room.

A fish leapt out of the stream and plunged back in with a loud splash.

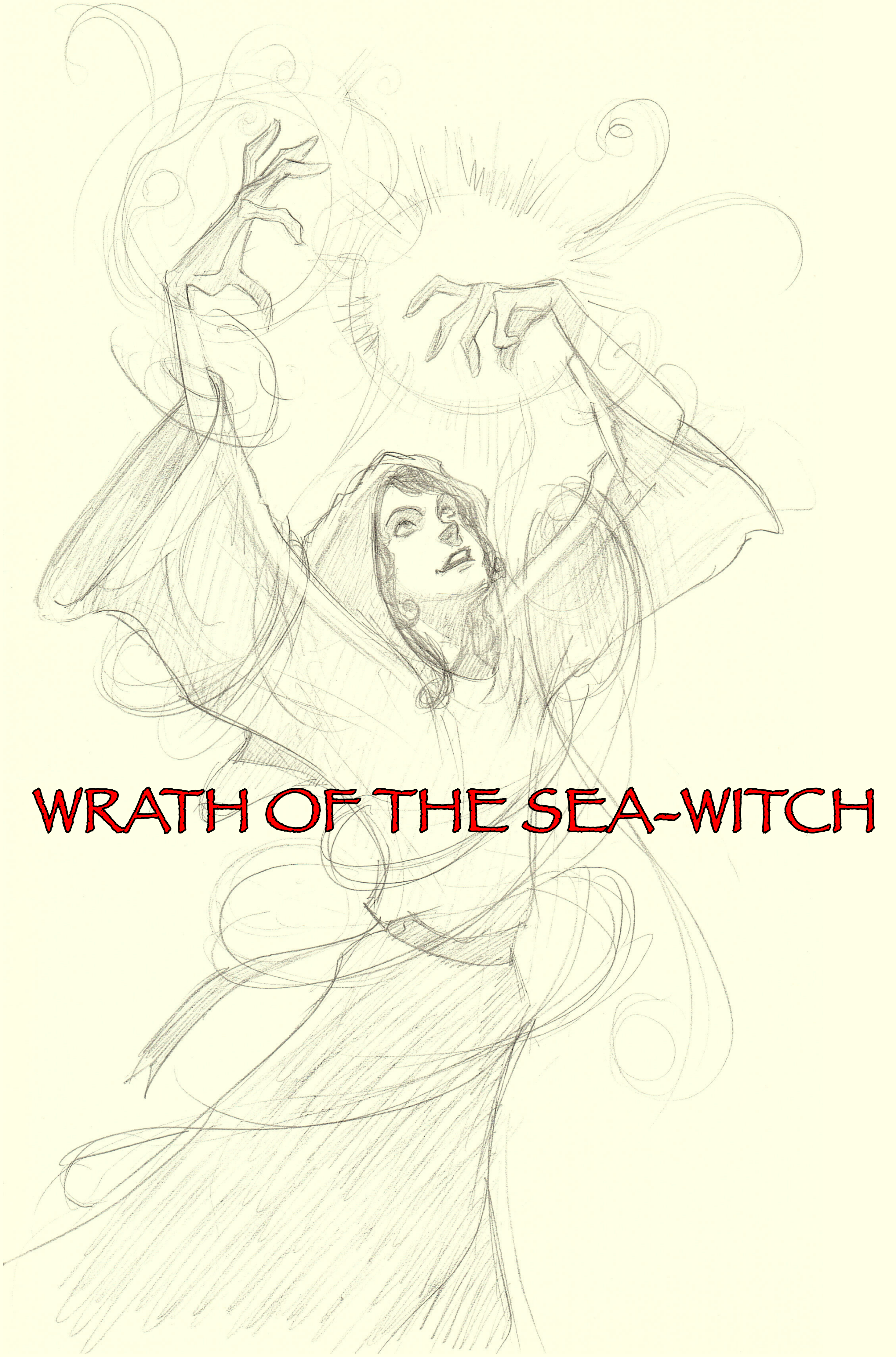
The young woman glanced up from bathing in the early morning sun. Her naked form was mostly under the water, but the splash alerted her to the fact that she vulnerable. Her clothes were tidily arranged close to the shore along with her father's sword. She quickly moved towards the shore and as she hurried out of the water, an incantation crossed her lips and within seconds her skin was dry as she slipped back into her clothes.

As she put on her cloak and slid her sword into the sheath that was attached to her belt, there was a rustle in the undergrowth close to the stream's edge.

'Are you ready, Io?' asked a handsome young man who emerged from the wooded area wearing a similar cloak. 'I have found us some breakfast.' He threw her a red apple, which she caught with an unnatural reflex as he bit into another apple he held in his right hand.

'Yes,' she answered. 'I have cleansed myself for the ordeal to come.'

'Good, then we should make our way to the accursed vale right now. By my reckoning we will be there early evening.'



WRATH OF THE SEA-WITCH

'Will the two of us be enough?'

The man suddenly spat out his mouth full of apple and at the same time with a wave of his left hand he caused the apple in her hand to explode. He gazed at the maggot ridden apple in his right hand with a look of pure disgust. 'Dark forces are trying to align against us, my sister. Our magic will be the weapon that defeats this evil. Had we brought a long an army of men, they would have suffered needlessly no matter how any orcs they slew.'

'It all comes down to you and I?'

'That is our destiny. Together we will send the fiend back to the Pit and rid the land of this menace for all time.'

'Why do the gods not help us in our hour of need, Aldric?'

'I do not know, Io. I know only that our combined magical ability is all that stands between the light we know and the darkness I have been dreaming of since we suckled at our mother's bosom.'

The blinding light flashed again.

The sun was setting on the horizon.

The young man and woman stood side by side close to the gnarled stump of an ancient tree with their swords drawn. Around them were scores and scores of Orcs, hungering for their blood. At their feet lays the bodies of several dead Orcs, slain by those drawn swords. The whole scene appeared to be unfolding in a forest clearing.

'Kill da humies,' cried an orc.

'Cut 'em up for da stew,' added another.

'Da female's are always da tastiest.'

'Could ave some fun with 'er furst,' cackled another voice.

This was followed by howls of delights.

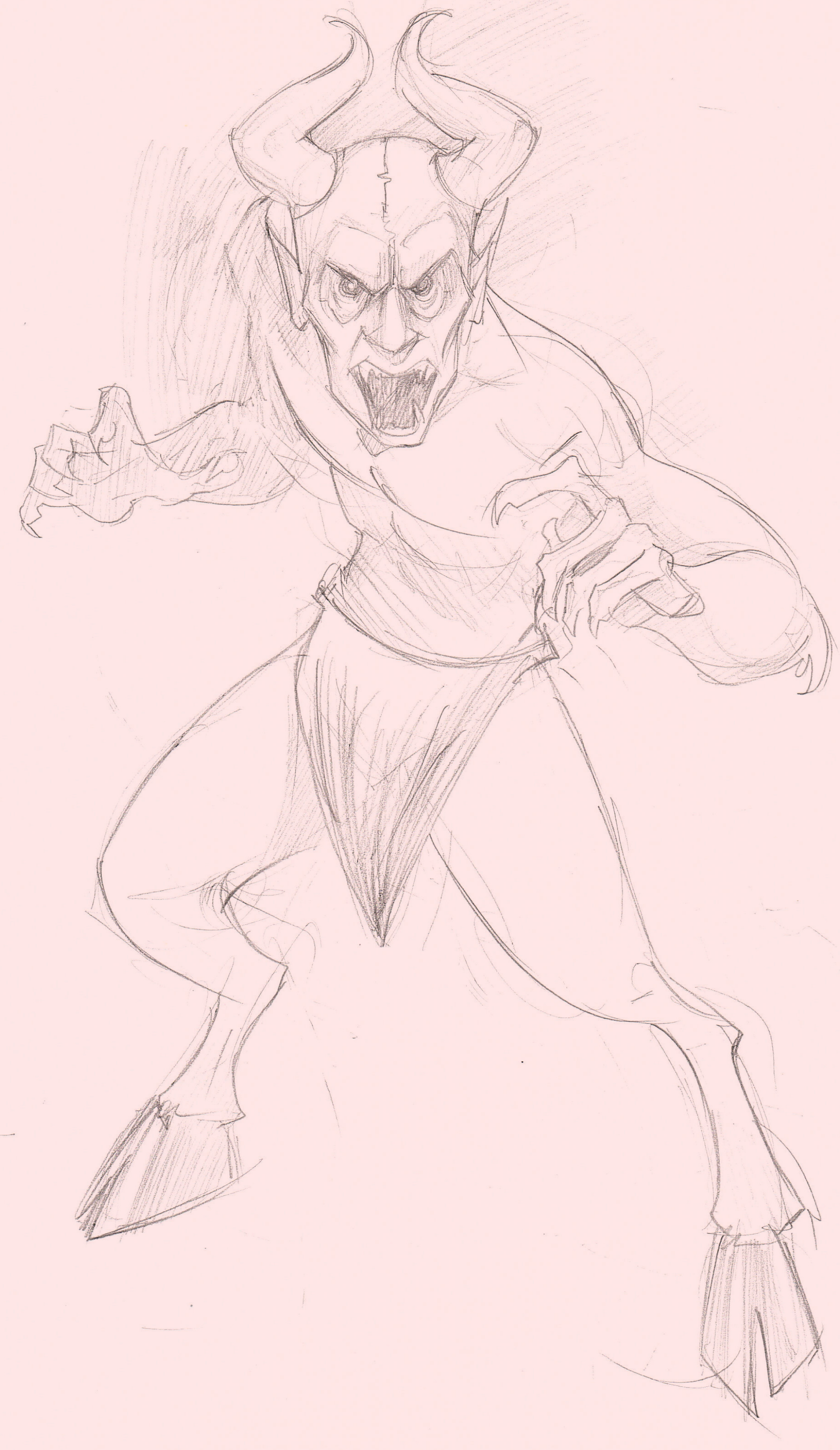
'Maybe da dark boss will want 'er?'

'Na, he sed we orcs wuld ave fun wit der humies.'

'Brother,' said the young woman as she slashed out at Orc that was trying to hack at her. Their blades clanked together heavily before the young Witch pushed the Orc's blade off. 'The dark boss they are talking of . . . would that be?'

'Yes. The forces of Chaos are attempting to slow us down. We are close to the point of summoning.'

Once again the blinding light flashed brightly.



The sun had set.

In a small glade that was lit by thirteen torches affixed to stakes that were struck into the ground surrounded by small piles of human skulls. In the centre of it several naked women, spread-eagled and pegged to the ground, howled and wailed as Orcs beat them mercilessly with cat o'nine tails topped with barbed hooks. Every lash soaked the earth in virgin blood. Barking orders to the Orcs were three human clad in dark robes wearing skull masks. In the very centre of the glade stood a Sorceress, naked but for a crown made from human finger bones on her head. Her arms were pointing to the heavens and she was chanting in an ancient, evil tongue. Every blasphemous word she sang was all part of the dark ritual that was taking place to bring forth an abomination onto Titan.

The Young Man and Woman watched from the edge of the glade at the horrific spectacle before them. Each had uttered incantations to sharpen their blades, which glistened in the darkness with magical fury. The fate of the entire world now lay in their hands.

Overhead a thunderstorm had suddenly developed directly over the glade and electrical bolts of lightning arched through the air striking the ground. A bolt blasted one of the skull masked humans; the body was instantly reduced to ash.

Suddenly the Sorceress let out a primordial scream of fear. Her naked body contorted at an unnatural angle and then as if something incredibly heavy was slowly lowered onto her body, her bones began to shatter as her twisted form was pushed to the ground.

'It's coming through;' whispered Aldric 'now is the time for us to strike.'

As the two young heroes leapt out and approached the centre of the glade. Several things happened at once. Blue lightning-balls shot from Io's outstretched hand and struck the remaining two skull masked humans square in the chest knocking them to the ground, their innards ruptured by the impact. At the same time with a wave of his hand Aldric sent all the Orcs flying through the air with a telekinetic push that dashed their brains on the ground. While in the centre of the glade, the malformed body of the Sorceress split apart as something dark and hideous came burrowing through it from the netherworld of the Pit into the realm of the living.

With a howl of rage signifying freedom, the Demon burst through the body and jumped up into the air with arms outstretched. Its cloven feet landed with a thump onto the blood soaked ground and immediately the spread-eagled virgins' bodies burst into green flames as their souls were sent screaming into the bowls of the Pit to be tormented for eternity.

'Beast,' cried Aldric. 'I know thy name.'

The Demon looked towards the voice and raised its right hand. A bolt of red energy flashed towards the advancing humans. Aldric batted the bolt away with his sword and leapt into the air with the blade ready to plunge into the Demon's chest at the same time as crying out...

'You cannot hear its name,' announced the voice of Delfina Cove as the blinding light flared up again. 'For the name of a Demon can give it life just as it can be used to send it back to the Pit.'

Aldric's body lay on the ground. His head lay several feet away.

The Demon was trying with all its unholy strength to prevent itself from being dragged back into the gaping maw that had appeared in the ground and was sucking it back down into the Pit. Its claws were scraping at the earth fruitlessly as the power of the Pit overwhelmed it. Io swung her blade and took the left claw clean off. She nimbly kicked at it and watched it disappear into the maw.

The Demon screamed and cursed at her in the foul language of the Pit. Io was about to cleave off its other hand when the thing's tongue shot out wrapped around her sword hand. She squealed in horror as she saw the tip of the tongue was a tiny little face with two eyes, a snout and tiny mouth. The tiny mouth bit down into her arm and she felt a wave of fire flow through her veins. The sword slipped from her hand and with the last ounce of her mental strength from her other hand she fired a bolt of blue energy straight at the face of the Demon.

The blast severed the Demon's tongue and saw the foul being disappear into the hole in the earth. The limp tongue slumped to the ground and then was sucked back into the gaping maw that closed up without a sound at the same time as the overhead thunderstorm ceased. As Io collapsed to the ground she heard a voice in her in her own native language. 'I CURSE YOU WITH THE IMMORTALITY OF MY KIND. AS I ENDLESSLY CRUCIFY AND FLAY YOUR BROTHER'S SOUL WHICH IS WAITING FOR ME IN THE PIT YOU WILL LIVE IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO END YOUR IMMORTALITY YOUR SOUL WILL SUFFER THE SAME FATE.'

The blinding light flashed once more and the images were replaced with the room full of crystals.

'Cursed by a Demon form the Pit,' sighed the Sea Witch. 'A curse which only I can undo by travelling into the Pit and defeating the Demon in there. An unlikely undertaking given all the other denizens of the Pit I would have to face first before I got anywhere near it. As powerful as I am magically, I'm not powerful to take on the Pit alone.'

'So exactly how does being cured with immortality work?' asked Raven.

'Not in a pleasant way.'

'It involves the girl you abducted, doesn't it?' Orchid's voice was laced with venom.

The Sea Witch nodded. 'Immortality has its price.'

'What do you need the girl for?'

'To stop me aging. I am immortal, but I was not cursed with eternal youth.'

The conversation was interrupted by the sound of a heavy bell chiming once.

'Ah,' said Cove raising her right-hand to her ear. 'The Bell of Judgment sounds. Come with me and perhaps you will witness the consequences to my curse firsthand.'

TO BE CONTINUED

FF

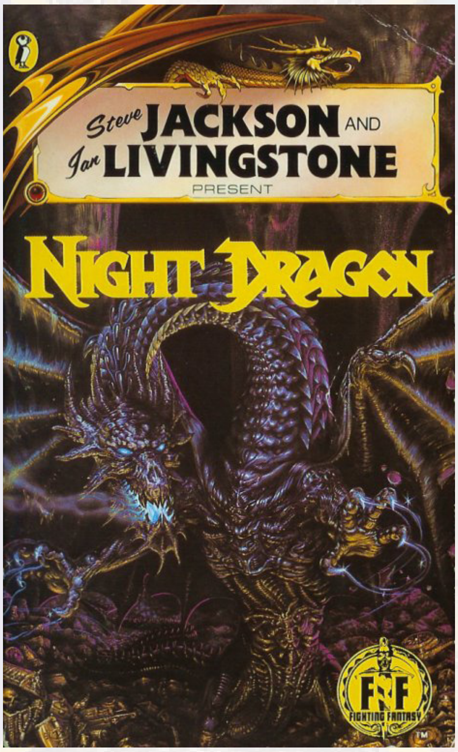
Everything I Need to Know I Learnt from Reading Fighting Fantasy Gamebooks

Part Six

Many people are fascinated by the meaningful, witty or just plain regrettable things that the powerful, significant, talented, and inexplicably popular had to say just before they died. Indeed, a quick Amazon search for 'famous last words' turns up thousands of books. Bandwagon-jumper Ed Jolley has been crouching down by the Puffin *Fighting Fantasy* range in its last days, straining to hear what pearls of wisdom it managed to gasp out as the last of its STAMINA ebbed away.

Island of the Undead
The leader of the Wizards of Solani Island evidently mastered one of the dark arts. By which I mean not necromancy but advertising. How else could he have convinced all his colleagues that raising the dead was going to give them a better understanding of the classical elements with which they worked? He probably devised a bunch of slogans to sell the idea to the other sorcerers – catchy stuff like, 'Zombies is good for you,' 'Go to work on a Ghoul,' and 'A Spectre (Dire) helps with mastering Fire'

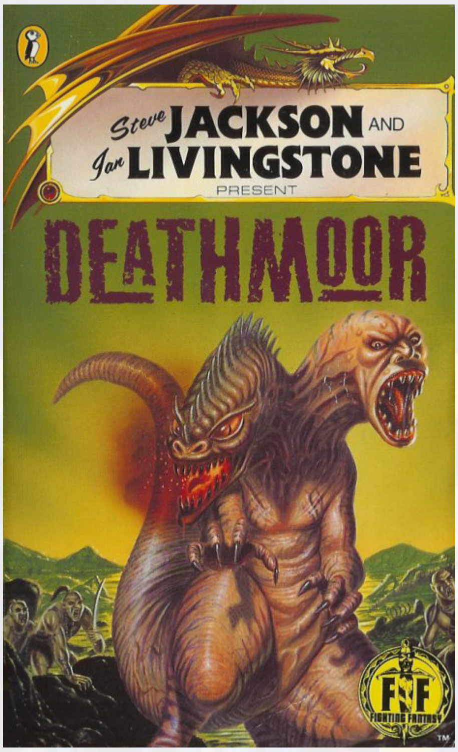
Moral: Even if the jingle is stuck in your head, that doesn't mean you have to buy the wretched product.



Night Dragon
This is an epic quest that takes you to a variety of different locations. It's a race against time, in which you sometimes have only semi-legible documents or barely coherent dying words to point you towards the next place you must go. It is, thus, baffling that you never consult a map of the region. Not to try and work out which town the fragment of a name you found could be referring to, nor to calculate the optimum route from where you are to where you should be via where you need to collect something you need along the way, and not even to help the Titanographers keep their atlases up to date. So even if you do save the world, you'll have few fans at the *Fighting Fantasy* wiki.
Moral: If you don't know the way, asking for directions does not make you a lesser person.

Spellbreaker
The Inquisitor in Tallow has compiled a lengthy list of things that 'prove' someone to be a practitioner of witchcraft. These include: healing the sick, possession of occult paraphernalia, not being able to hold your breath for very long, never before having got far enough through the gamebook to learn that you should have taken that potion two sections ago, and successfully passing every test for witchcraft that he can devise. It never comes up in the book, but it seems reasonable to assume that his list also includes the likes of being consistent, using logic, and reading *Spellbreaker*.
Moral: Some people are never satisfied. If at all possible, avoid having anything to do with them.

Legend of Zagor
Here we have a monstrous hybrid that defeats many of those who seek to overcome it. No, not the Zagor-Demon, but the book itself: a hideous fusion of Ian Livingstone's creations and Keith Martin's style, which kills plenty of readers' enjoyment of the adventure faster than its overpowered villain can slice up an ill-equipped comedy Dwarf.
Moral: Some things just don't go together well. Think carefully before you try combining the only two bits of food left in the fridge the next time you get inexplicably hungry at 2am.



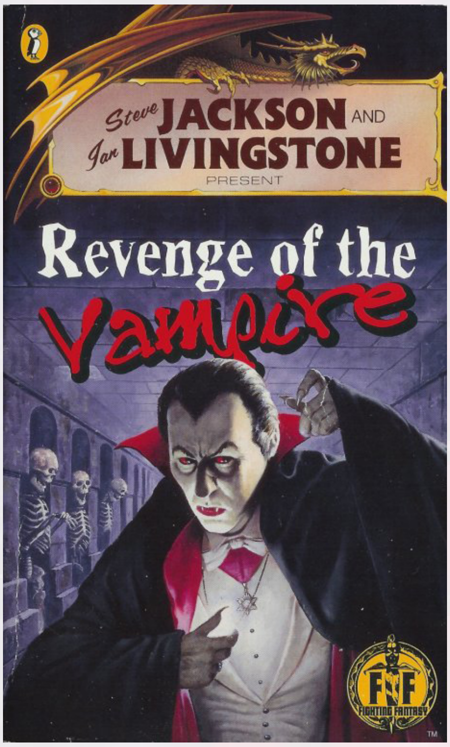
Deathmoor
Arion's most villainous plumbers are brought to justice when you are able to identify the thug who carried out a killing on their behalf. Now, you're supposed to be able to figure out who he is because of his torn hanky, but it's hard to spot in the illustration even if you know to look for it. No, the real reason you know he has to be the man is because you learn his name in so convoluted a manner that it has to have some significance to the plot, right?
Moral: Avoid socially awkward situations by taking care to introduce yourself clearly when meeting new people.

ED JOLLEY is back with another roll of the dice to explore more morals you didn't even know the gamebooks were selling you...

Knights of Doom

What's in a name? A good deal, at least in Ruddlestone. Consider the two brothers who opposed one another a century before, one with a name that sounded like 'chivalrous', the other with a last syllable pronounced 'wrath', and it was the first who fought on the side of good, while the second was the angry one. And would the dread Necromancer of Myrton have chosen that dark career path if his parents hadn't saddled him with such a corpsey name?

Moral: No matter how cool you think the name sounds, take time to check on its meaning and potential negative associations before inflicting it on your child.



Magehunter

There must be something in the atmosphere of Titan that turns villains stupid. Mencius is a competent and dangerous foe, but after a few days in Kallamehr he'll seek his nemesis out for a quick gloat, and hand over one of the items the Magehunter needs in order to have a chance at thwarting him. That is, unless our hero happens to be efficient enough to track the evil mage down before the dumbing-down effect can take hold, in which case he winds up wishing he hadn't found him quite so soon.

Moral: Don't rush your work if there's no need. You're more likely to get good results if you take the time to do it properly.

Revenge of the Vampire

Sequels rarely bring back absolutely everyone who appeared in the original story, and this book is no exception. However, it does differ from most follow-ups in one significant regard. The only characters from *Vault of the Vampire* who do return in its sequel are the named members of the Heydrich family who are definitely, absolutely and unequivocally dead by section 400 of the first book. Sure, there's plenty of precedent for death not being an obstacle to coming back later in a series, but making it a prerequisite? Now that's groundbreaking. Especially where the deceased are buried.

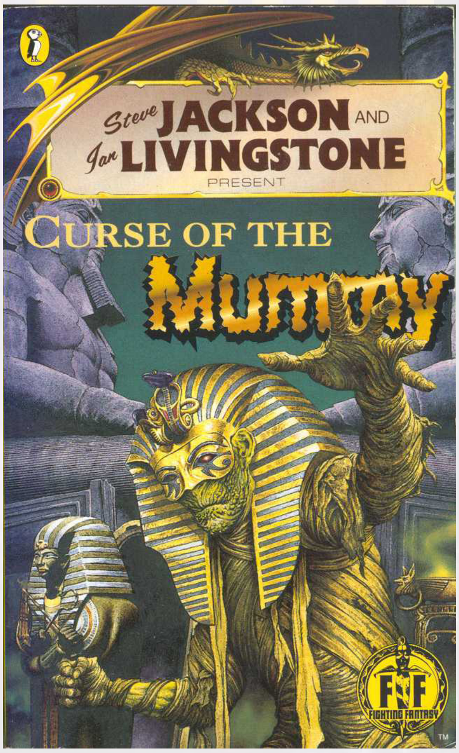
Moral: The people who attend a reunion aren't necessarily the ones you'd expect to come, so if there are only one or two old friends that you actually want to see again, be prepared for disappointment.

Curse of the Mummy

Some of the food offerings placed in Akharis' tomb centuries ago are still edible enough to function as extra portions of Provisions. In a not entirely dissimilar vein, stuff in the larder or fridge may still be okay to eat even if it's slightly past its sell-by date. Check it carefully first, though, as you're not likely to have much fun learning just how much more harm botulism can do than some puny SKILL 7 Tomb Guardian.

Moral: Waste not, want not, but don't take unnecessary risks with your health.

OCD is a harsh taskmaster. Every previous instalment in this series had ten entries, which makes the lack of a sixtieth book in the series somewhat inconvenient. So it's a good thing that *White Dwarf* magazine serialised a mini-gamebook for *Fighting Fantasy* back in the mid-eighties (and that's probably the first time that anyone has ever used the phrase 'a good thing' in connection with that adventure).



The Dark Usurper

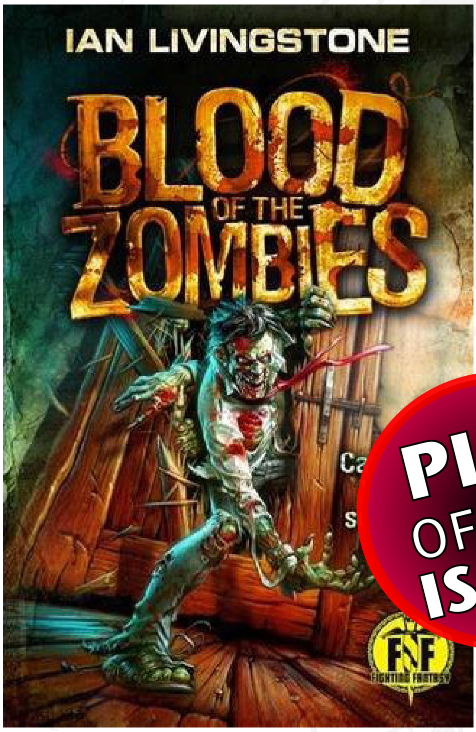
One of Corwin Calbraith's principal allies in his quest to reclaim his lands from Barnak the Brigand is the wizard Asmund, who advises and trains Corwin during his transition from fugitive to army leader. What makes this unusual is that at their first meeting, Corwin had to rescue Asmund from three Goblins, and anyone so inept as to need saving from such foes (especially when he has two trained Pumas to help him out) is clearly far better suited to the function of Bungling Comic Relief than Enigmatic Mentor.

Moral: Don't get too disheartened if you fail to make a good first impression. Good spin doctoring can often get people to overlook the odd embarrassing blunder.

Blood of the Zombies

Written by Ian Livingstone • **Illustrated by** Kevin Crossley
Wizard Books • **Published** August 9th 2012 • **RRP** £7.99

To celebrate thirty years of *Fighting Fantasy* Wizard Books have given us that rarest of beasts, a new *Fighting Fantasy* gamebook. But they were left with a difficult choice. Do you publish a book which celebrates the past achievements of the series and possibly retread old ground (as had been done with *Eye of the Dragon* in 2005), or go with something new that helps prove that there is still life in the system yet?



PICK OF THE ISSUE!

As Livingstone notes in his foreword, the temptation was there to do the former. Instead this book looks forward in an almost aggressive manner. The is most evident in the pared down instructions section which strips the stats back to a simple STAMINA and introduces a DAMAGE feature. It is not something that I feel the series could get away with on a regular basis, but helps with the impression that it is a regeneration of the range rather than reheated leftovers.

Your **realism meter** may vary as to whether or not these **quick deaths** are a realistic interpretation of combat with hordes of **zombies**.

The combat useage of DAMAGE does give the book the feel of a generic zombie computer game, where it is all about surviving wave after wave of enemies. This element possibly speaks of Livingstone trying to reach a new game-savvy audience of young readers. Whatever the intentions behind the introduction of DAMAGE, it is a simple system that makes for quick and simple fights. Unfortunately the 'quick' bit usually means the reader has died if they often roll low numbers. It is perhaps a little too easy to die under hordes of zombies. Your realism meter may vary as to whether or not these quick deaths are a realistic interpretation of combat with hordes of zombies. (A second printing of the book has subsequently altered the 2d6+12 STAMINA roll to a 2d6+20, meaning most readers will now survive for a little bit longer than they have before.) A further disadvantage of this streamlining is that the book is limited to pretty much only fighting zombies and that the loss of a SKILL stat means other physical feats, such as the old standby of shouldering locked doors open, are missing.

In addition to the lean rules, the book has the series making a foray into the modern world for the first time since *House of Hell*. Livingstone hedges his bets here by restricting the player to the environs of Goraya Castle. This does raise some thoughts of comparison with *House of Hell* which does a similar thing in limiting that adventure to the interior of the house. That said, Livingstone does a good job of populating the castle with all manner of interesting encounters and rooms. So the world building is quite good, but we'll just have to wait for another book to give us a more free-ranging adventure in a modern setting.

And on to the gamebook itself! For all the go-ahead modernising of the range in terms of rules, setting, and presentation, this is very much old school Livingstone at work. As with many of his previous *Fighting Fantasy* adventures, the route to victory is an incredibly narrow one which relies on the reader make all the right choices at every step of the way. While this means that the reader can gain some immense satisfaction with reaching the optimum ending to the tale, the fact that this course must be adhered to almost exactly everytime means that *Blood of the Zombies* suffers in terms of replay value.

So in summation, what do we have? *Blood of the Zombies* is a worthy entry in the *Fighting Fantasy* canon, one that both offers new things (even if they aren't all successful additions) and brings back some of the things we older readers recall (although I'm sure many would prefer if the book wasn't quite so hard on the reader in the same manner as *Crypt of the Sorcerer*). *Fighting Fantasy* at the end of the day comes out of this new release with a spring in its step, leaving one to hope that there will be a next step!

ALEXANDER BALLINGALL

Next issue there will be a review of the tin Man Games app version of Blood of the Zombies.

Crown of Kings – The Sorcery! Campaign

Written by Graham Bottley, Steve Jackson • **Illustrated by** various artists
Arion Games • **Published** March 28th 2012 • **RRP** US$29.99

Arion Games' first published scenario for 2nd edition *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* is The Crown of the Kings remade for the RPG. Graham has modified the scenario well to adapting the encounters to a group of *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* heroes and creates a faithful adaptation of the classic journey to Mampang.

STEVE JACKSON AND IAN LIVINGSTONE
CROWN OF KINGS
ADVANCED FIGHTING FANTASY
THE SORCERY! CAMPAIGN
ARION GAMES
GRAHAM BOTTLEY
STEVE JACKSON

The book is split into four chapters, each section covering the same material as one of the four books in the *Sorcery!* series. The sections are accompanied by art from the books and maps of the locations that the heroes visit. Each chapter has a numbered map so that the director (nice throwback to the original there) knows how all the areas on the map are connected. Some areas such as villages or cave networks have their own maps.

So how is the Crown of the Kings when it is presented as an RPG rather than in a gamebook? Graham has made changes to accommodate the skills system and the larger number of adventurers. The areas themselves are very similar to the areas in the gamebooks, modified to suit a group rather than a single player. There are some other changes. What would have led you to an instant death paragraph in the *Sorcery!* gamebooks leads to a combat or a loss of stamina points in the RPG scenario and this makes sense. Players do not put very much effort into their gamebook character whereas their RPG characters may be old favourites with a long history (especially if they have accrued between 100~200 experience points as the adventure recommends).

Also, memorable NPCs such as the sulphur ghost in Khare or the Archmage are either given stats that the book does not give or they are given different stats to balance out the encounter. I was glad to see that the Archmage had been upgraded from a SKILL 7 STAMINA 7 weakling to a SKILL 12 STAMINA 20 fire-breathing magic resistant monster. Some situations have had their weirder moments removed. Alianna the witch no longer attacks you after you have freed her and the Moon Serpent no longer dies to someone carrying a tinderbox. Also, the director is advised to think carefully about using Jann, the annoying anti-magic Minimite.

Other changes which make the RPG scenario more interesting than the gamebooks include allowing the players to use whatever sorcery spell they like when they like and allowing them to backtrack and explore every area so that failure is not inevitable.

The book also offers a little extra background into some of the characters and their place in the world. It could expand even more on some of the areas and characters and I would have liked the NPCs to have been given skills and a social scale in addition to their skill, stamina and weapons. Although it would have held little relevance, it would have given the impression of a more living, breathing world. This adventure also offers no areas other than the ones found in the original books, which makes it a faithful adaptation which some may say is too faithful and it could have benefitted from more encounters. It also removes a couple of things such as the use of the silver serpent ring from Kharé.

However, there is already plenty of source material from the original books to work with and it will provide an entertaining series of adventures based on a classic series of gamebooks.

STUART LLOYD

TrollsZine! #5

Edited by Dan Hembree • **Illustrated by** various artists
Trollbridge Production • **Published** June 13th 2012 • **RRP** Free

TrollsZine! 5 is out and once again it brings us an eclectic and humorous collection of rules, a solo, a GM adventure and a short story written in the unique style that we enjoy from *Tunnels & Trolls*. This issue's rules bring us a new direction to take your wizards and rogues with the bard of Cala profession, interesting things you can do with zombies, a take on martial arts and a comprehensive explanation on how to use chariots and barding in campaigns. There is also an in depth question and answer session with the Trollgod, Ken St. Andre himself, about the 7.5 edition rules.

My particular favourite of this issue is the Nexus, the post apocalyptic scenario where a once beautiful place has been turned into a hostile battlefield where the forces of good and evil fight relentlessly and the heroes can be mutated into seraphs, demons or monsters with all kinds of strange powers.

In true *Tunnels & Trolls* tradition, the solo offers something unique. You are a gladiator who wants to escape from the arena and you start the adventure rolling up several characters and picking the most suitable. You may need your other characters later on, though as they are your fellow gladiators. You also have to use sections from other solos.

All this is available along with a short story and a GM scenario, making *TrollsZine!* 5 another must read fanzine (after you have read *Fighting Fantazine*, of course). *Tunnels & Trolls* the RPG is also worth keeping a close eye on as there is a new edition planned and new solos are being released by its dedicated fan base all the time. I'm sure the next issue of *TrollsZine!* will cover this.

STUART LLOYD

FF

FF Fighting Fantasy Collector

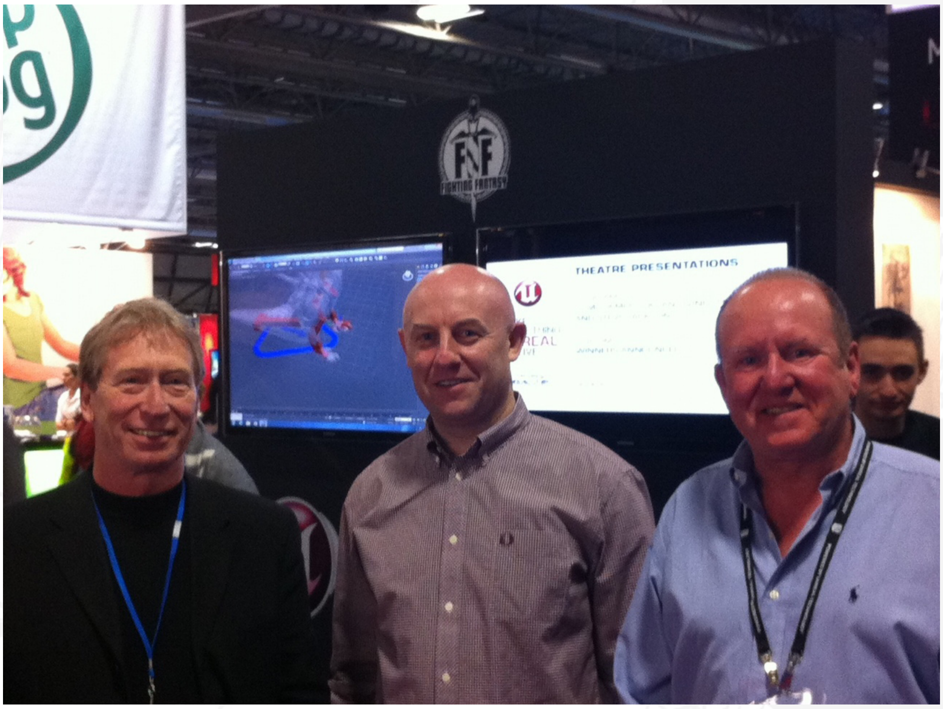
Fightingfantasycollector.co.uk

2012 has been the year I expected for *Fighting Fantasy*, in fact gamebooks in general are not doing too bad either. I firmly believe the build-up to the release of *Blood of the Zombies* (book and app), the hype on their release and the subsequent anniversary chatter firmly put it back on the map with fans new and old. On the actual 30th anniversary day itself, 27th August to be precise (the exact day *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* was published all those years ago), I spent most of it talking to well-wishers on Twitter and Facebook and reading blogs celebrating the event. Ian Livingstone was very active that day as well. The website traffic went through the roof following the launch of a 30 question quiz on *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* to mark the occasion.

Earlier in the year I attended the Train2Game / Epic Games 'Make Something Unreal' event at the Gadget Show Live in Birmingham where I had the pleasure of meeting the four indie software developer teams all competing for a licence to produce their *Fighting Fantasy* game. They were as follows:

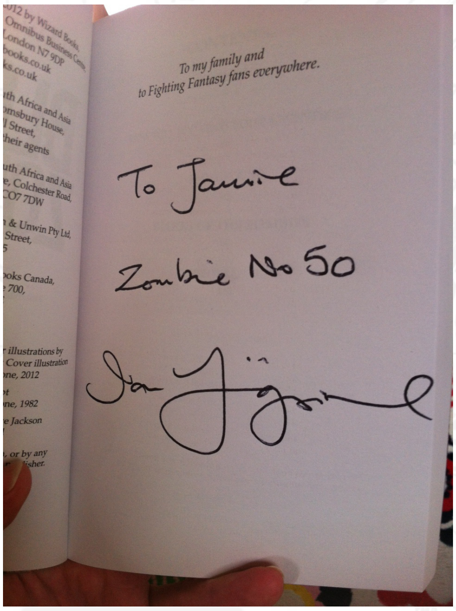
1: Commando Kiwi - *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain: Lost Chapters* (Winners)
2: Derp Studios - *Citadel of Chaos: Dire Consequences*
3: Digital Mage - *Armies of Death: Rise of Agglax*
4: Indigo Jam - *Deathtrap Dungeon*

I was very impressed with the quality of work from all 4 developers but Commando Kiwi won the vote with *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain: Lost Chapters*. News on its release is yet to be announced and it is not clear on what platform it will come out on. I have a Commando Kiwi limited edition poster to show for my visit and also managed to snaffle a Train2Game goody bag containing a pad, pen, mints and bizarrely, a travel toothbrush and paste set. Although the bag is now my daughters PE bag for School.



On Saturday 4th August I went to the book launch at the Forbidden Planet megastore in London to witness Ian Livingstone signing the newly released *Blood of the Zombies* books for his loyal and adoring fans. I went with Neil Rennison of Tin Man Games and met the artist Tony Hough. Representatives were on hand from Icon books as well. Blogger's Stuart Lloyd and Paul Smith were also present in the crowd. Ian signed and numbered every book as a Zombie, with his son keeping the tally, I secured no.50. I believe 73 were given out in the short time Ian had to do the signing in. I understand he has kept this up every time he has signed since but I have no idea what number he has reached, however, what I do know is that he wanted to reach the magic number. For those that have read and completed the book will know what that means and as this is a no spoiler zone I will not be letting that secret out here. Fans also bought with them some original books that they were proudly sharing with Ian and having them signed as well. It is here I also got to see the first makings of the app on iPad as adapted by Tin Man.

In addition to a signed copy of *Blood of the Zombies* firmly planted in my bag I picked up a signed hardback copy of Michael J. Wards *DestinyQuest: The Legion of Shadow* as well to add to my wider collection



To my family and to Fighting Fantasy fans everywhere.

To Jamie

Zombie No 50

Above: Steve Jackson, Jamie Fry, and Ian Livingstone at the Train2Game/Epic Games 'Make Something Unreal' event.
Left: Ian's signature on Jamie's copy of *Blood of the Zombies*.

Collector **JAMIE FRY** covers the 'moving and shaking' going on in the *Fighting Fantasy* world over the past few months...

Above: Paul Smith, Neil Rennison (of Tin Man Games) and Stuart Lloyd at the Forbidden Planet launch event for *Blood of the Zomies*.

(with 2 bookmarks!). All this was followed by a pint shared with Neil, Stuart, Paul and Ian, yes; Ian joined us for a pint and chat afterwards.

Looking through my notes in preparation for next year's edition of the guide I want to share some of the changes I am making and new editions to it. Yet to be confirmed (as I do not have the book) is a rumour that a bronze dragon version of *Night Dragon* at 52, with number on spine only was also printed. A Twitter follower has also reminded me that in addition to *Chasm of Malice*, the zig-zag version of *Temple of Terror* has no Puffin logo at the bottom of the spine either. Despite asking I am yet to find out if *Blood of the Zombies* is number 17 in "Series 2" or does it form part of a new series being in a different format again. I suppose thinking about it, unless other new books are released then it would make no sense to start a new series. I forgot to mention that when I was at Dragonmeet last year I also picked up a badge with the original yellow *Fighting Fantasy* logo on it that I believe was commissioned/made by Paul Badowski.

A new *Advanced Fighting Fantasy* adaptation of *Sorcery!: Crown of the Kings* by Graham Bottley (Arion Games) made it to our shelves although I am still waiting for my signed *Blacksand!* Indiegogo investment to arrive in the same format. That reminds me to add all the special editions coming out of that as well to the list. Due to it being the 30th Anniversary it is a good year for magazine collectables. I had a short article in *SCIFI NOW* #64 printed that I spoke of before. The *SFX Fantasy Special Edition* #55 that contains a 12-page article by Jonathan Green, entitled 'Legacy of Firetop Mountain'. *Retro Gamer* #102 has an 8-page interview with Ian Livingstone mainly focusing on the gamebooks in the differing electronic formats. *SFX Magazine* #225 contains a short review of *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* by way of a tribute and *Imagine FX* #88 boasts a 10-page article dedicated to the art from the books in particular that of Iain McCaig, it also shows off the art from *Blood of the Zombies*.

That leads me nicely onto *Blood of the Zombies* collectables. An A2 poster of the book cover has been released, as has an A4 4-sided card promotional brochure, which is also available on-line for download (ISSUU). For the hard-core collector among you I also have the Icon Books catalogue in which the book features over two pages. In addition to the printed version of the book, Tin Man Games have released *Blood of the Zombies* as an app on the iOS and Android platforms with others to follow. Tin Man are well known for issuing bookmarks and postcards with every release of their *Gamebook Adventures* and this one should be no exception, I just haven't got any myself yet (hint hint Mr Rennison).

Speaking of apps, Tin Man will be releasing *House of Hell* next with *Forest of Doom* and *Appointment with F.E.A.R.* too follow next year (and bookmarks etc. I hope). It is also likely they will follow these up with some classics such as *Warlock*, *Citadel* and *Deathtrap*. They have set-up fightingfantasyapps.com exclusively for them. Just as exciting is the release of the *Sorcery!* apps by Inkle. Expect to see the first one, *The Shamutanti Hills*, out early next year. The original apps by SEB J and Big Blue Bubble are no longer available. Worldweaver have released *Creature of Havoc* on Kindle but no new releases for PSP/PS3 from Laughing Jackal at this stage. Nothing to report on the *House of Hell* or *Deathtrap Dungeon* movies either.

"What will 2013 bring?," I hear you all ask. Well I am confident that the books in the electronic formats are a given but will Ian or Steve be convinced enough to write a new title, or someone else, without the anniversary as a reason, let's hope so. I have a few plans of my own but even as the Webmaster of the official site I am not always up to speed with the deals until the last minute, they like to keep things secret as long as possible, just to be sure contracts are signed off etc. So, on that basis I get a feeling something will come out of the woodwork that will never fail to amaze us all and wanting more, just the fuel Steve and Ian need to keep going themselves.
October 2012

FF

FF FIGHTING DANTASY

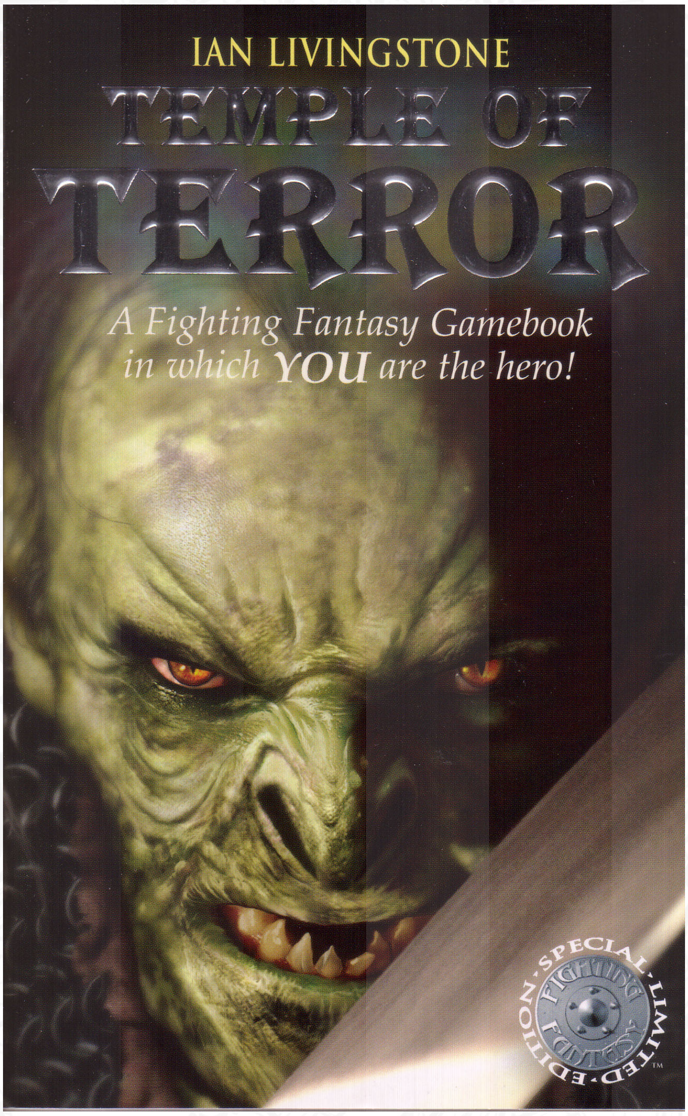
adapted from Fightingdantasy.blogspot.com

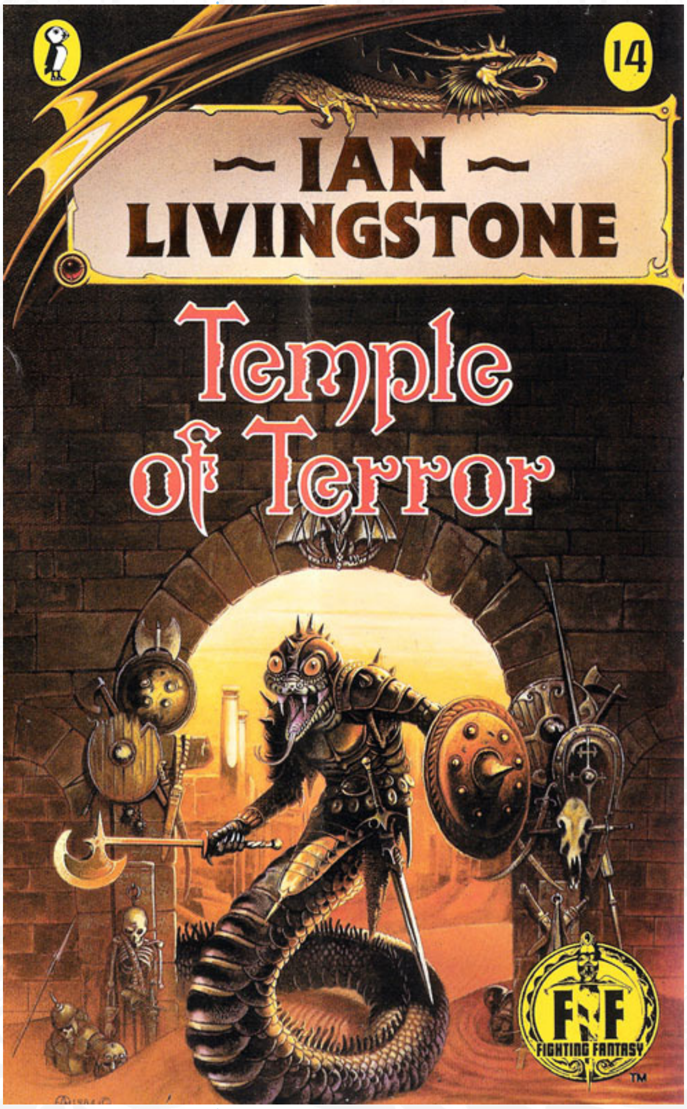
Another brutal, brusing book from Ian Livingstone, *Temple of Terror* finds the series back in its familiar fantasy setting after a couple of diversions into the future.

As if to make up for lost time, *Temple of Terror* has it all – one good wizard and one evil wizard, phantoms, torture, deserts, pirates, spells, dwarves, sandworms, drinking, and more. And I didn't even get to the end!

Basically Allansia is under threat from Malbordus, an evil wizard (first box ticked) who only needs to locate the five lost dragon artefacts in the city of Vatos to be unstoppable – one does wonder why none of the previous evil wizards bothered looking for these MacGuffins, but hey. I'm not one to question the methods of evil wizards.

Apparently this Malbordus guy became evil because when he was born, the moon was full and howling wolves surrounded his mother's hut – I imagine this is how Ozzy Osbourne came into the world.





The book begins with a visit to Yaztromo, the friendly old wizard from *The Forest of Doom*, who mentioned I looked familiar. I assume this is an in-joke of sorts, bla bla bla, but I died a horrible death at the hands of a Wyvern on that adventure, so yeah... I must be a twin.

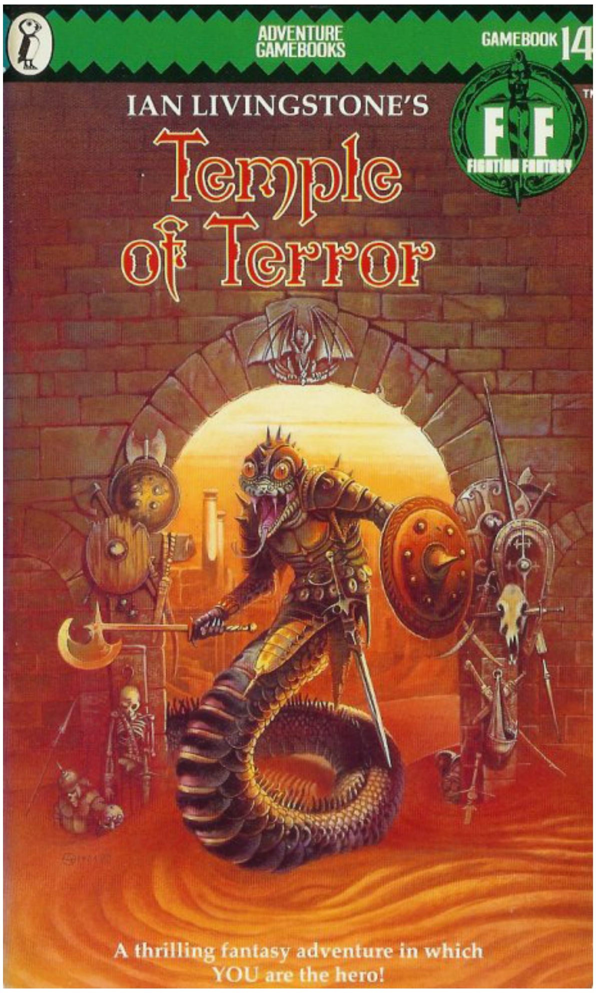
He taught me a few spells and I was soon off, to either go across the desert or through Port Blacksand. I've enjoyed my previous wanders through the so-called 'city of thieves', so thought yeah, why not.

Why not? Because I soon found myself on a pirate ship I knew was going to get its ass kicked by an approaching man-o-war. Luckily I escaped, and was soon in the desert. Dang it.

Somewhere in amongst all this I was at a bar, and bumped into a guy, spilling his three large jugs of ale. It cost a solitary gold piece to replace them – why the hell was I bothering with this quest, when I could get three beers for a buck?

Anyway, after an arduous trek across the desert, I found

Remember reading your first *Fighting Fantasy* adventure? The desperate search for the items you need to win, the frantic dice rolls as you fight to stay in one piece mere paragraphs from your goal? **DAN SATHERLEY** recreates those tense moments by working his way through the series book by book and recording his efforts as he goes.



the city of Vatos and began searching for the dragon artefacts. I soon came across a casket, and was asked if I wanted to open it. Considering I'd just been to see *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, I thought yeah, alright. Bingo! Dragon artefact. If only it was so easy for Indy.

An interesting twist in this book was the 'Death' creature thingee – he doesn't kill you right away, but instead leaves the five letters of the word 'death' lying about – if you read all five, you die. I only managed to read 'Th' which I suppose would just give me a lisp (lithp?) or something.

Something else I found interesting was that when I came across a small box with a picture of a dragon on it, I was 'surprised and delighted' to find a dragon artefact inside. Woah, couldn't see that one coming. But without the sarcasm, I truly was surprised to kill a phantom by throwing a button at it. No kidding.

In the end, the endless adjustments to my LUCK, SKILL and STAMINA scores were too much, and I was killed in the first attack round by a 'night horror'. This thing was almost impossible to injure, and drained your skill as you fought it. I really hope beating this thing isn't required to finish, 'cause it's a horribly unbalanced opponent to come across prior to any 'boss'.

I actually came across a paragraph where you fight Malbordus (not one I was on, it was on the opposite page) and he wasn't even as difficult to beat as this 'night horror'.

So, *Temple of Terror* covered a lot of ground and threw the kitchen sink at it, but I think was let down by the continual battering your character goes through. I was surprised to make it as far as I did, to be honest.

COMING IN ISSUE #11

MINI ADVENTURE:
ascent of darkness

by **Stuart Lloyd**

The Caarth horde threatens your home, the shining city of Caresepolis, but you are an unstoppable force who cuts swathes through the legions of darkness. However, news of the death of your father awakens you to a greater, more insidious danger that lurks within the walls of Carespeolis itself. Can you overcome reptillian hordes, mighty warriors and devious magic users to stop the ascent of darkness?

INTERVIEW:
PIECES OF MASONRY

The second part of the interview with **Paul Mason** rumbles on as we cover his contributions to the main series of *Fighting Fantasy* gamebooks.

ARTICLE:
ROGUES' GUIDE

The first in an irregular series looking a different places around Titan. For the opening outing, the Guide team head to Port Blacksand...

EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW I LEARNT FROM READING FIGHTING FANTASY GAMEBOOKS
AELOUS RAVEN AND THE WRATH OF THE SEA-WITCH | FIGHTING FANTASY COLLECTOR
THE HUNT FOR THE BLACK WHALE | CHRONICLE OF HEROES | FIGHTING DANTASY

Grio